

**Title: draft interim planning statement 10: strategic development principles for the university area**

**interim planning statements**

The City of Plymouth Local Plan First Deposit (1995-2011) was published in December 2001. Following consideration of all the representations received, the City Council had intended to publish the 'Second Deposit' version in the autumn of 2003. However, because of the changes being proposed by the Government to the development planning system nationally, the Council's Executive Committee has decided to move towards the production of a new 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). This is expected to be published in April 2004. Subject to the necessary legislation having been introduced, the LDF will then be placed on formal deposit, as soon as possible thereafter.

In order not to prevent progress being made by the City Council and its partners in the meantime, in actively pursuing urban renaissance and other planning objectives, the Council has decided to produce a number of 'Interim Planning Statements' (IPs).

IPs have been devised by the City Council as a means of dealing with matters on which guidance or decisions are urgently required, in the period between First Deposit of the Local Plan, and the publication of the new LDF. They are intended to:

- address any policy issues that require urgent attention
- supplement policies and proposals of the adopted and emerging plans, by the provision of 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' (SPG)

**STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT**

Following public consultation, this document has been adopted by the City Council, and will be taken into account as a material consideration in the decision-making process.

**This booklet is also available in Braille and large print. To request a copy please telephone 01752 307845.**

## introduction

Plymouth City Council and the University of Plymouth have entered into a partnership agreement so they can closely collaborate on a series of exciting new regeneration projects that will benefit both the University and the wider Plymouth community.

As part of the Partnership agreement, the University has commissioned the City Council to prepare a Master Plan for the University Area to enable the University to bring forward development proposals in a co-ordinated and planned manner.

As a first stage, the City Council has approved the following eight goals, which will guide the development of the Master Plan.

- **A vibrant area.** Establishing the University as a vibrant, distinctive and diverse area of Central Plymouth.
- **Breaking down barriers.** Improve the quality of the environment between the University and the City Centre and improve connections to other areas of central Plymouth.
- **Better streets and public spaces.** Create a hierarchy of high quality streets and public spaces.
- **Pedestrians first.** Create an environment where pedestrians and cyclists have priority.
- **A Cultural Quarter.** Create a distinctive “Cultural Quarter” centred on North Hill.
- **Quality buildings.** Conserve the best historic buildings and introduce new high quality architecture.
- **Better gateways.** Establish positive gateways between the University and neighbouring areas of the City.
- **Improved skyline.** Create a distinctive skyline for central Plymouth.

## **background**

The eight goals were derived primarily from other initiatives that are taking place in the area so that the Master Plan can be looked at in the strategic context of the City as a whole rather than inwardly looking to the area immediately relevant to the University itself. The key initiatives/ documents that have been used to identify the goals are:

- Draft Development Framework for the University (prepared for the University by Llewelyn Davies Consultants).
- The University Estates Strategy.
- The Plymouth City Strategy
- The Plymouth Cultural Strategy.
- City of Plymouth Local Plan 1995-2011 (First Deposit 2001)
- A Vision for Plymouth (MBM Architectes) (emerging document commissioned by Plymouth 2020 Partnership).

The goals have also been considered in the context of existing development opportunities, for example the development and transport proposals for the new shopping centre at Drakes Circus.

## **consultation**

To ensure that there was active engagement with the local community and stakeholders in the early master planning work, a consultation exercise took place between 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003 and 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003. Views were sought on the appropriateness of the eight goals.

The consultation involved the following activities and events:

- Presentation to Mutley and Greenbank Community Trust
- Presentation to the Compton, Drake and Peverell Area Committee
- Discussions with Council Officers representing: Transport and Planning, Economic Development and Urban Regeneration, Environment and Consumer Protection, Housing and Residential Services, School Organisation and Services and Community, Leisure and Learning.
- Discussion with City Centre Partnership Representatives
- Correspondence with representatives of Plymouth 2020 Partnership.
- Correspondence with representatives of the Cultural Quarter Steering Group
- A series of workshops with representatives from the University covering the following topics: accommodation/ development issues, transport issues and public realm issues.
- A public exhibition that was held at the Sherwell Centre between 21<sup>st</sup> July 2003 and 26<sup>th</sup> July 2003. The exhibition was then moved to the Central Public Library between 28<sup>th</sup> July 2003 and 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003. The exhibition was staffed on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> July between 5pm and 7pm, Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July between 9am and 12 noon and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August between 1pm and 5pm.
- There was further publicity about the consultation exercise through a newspaper article in the Evening Herald, local television coverage, posters distributed throughout the local area and a targeted door to door leaflet drop to residents at Camden Street flats and Winifred Baker Court (Addison Street). These two residential areas were considered to have the majority of the permanent residents who would be directly affected by the Master Plan work.

The comments to the consultation were relayed either through feedback forms that were distributed at the exhibition, discussion with officers or through letters. A full list of the comments received along with the Council's response and any resulting changes to the goals are available in a separate document entitled "Interim Planning Statement 10: Strategic Development Principles for the University Area (Representations Received)"

## **a vibrant area**

### **establish the university as a vibrant, distinctive and diverse area of central plymouth**

The University Area is a distinctive area of central Plymouth. There is an opportunity to build upon its qualities to create an environment that is more rounded, has greater vitality and enjoys a more seamless relationship with neighbouring areas.

The University Area comprises mostly education related activities. Clustering uses in the same area has clear benefits for the working of the University and these need to be maintained. There are however some disadvantages.

The University Area can lack activity during the evening and during vacation periods. Buildings that “close-up” during the evening and vacation periods can create a threatening environment in the streets and spaces around them.

The University Area can become more vibrant by introducing a more diverse mix of uses that are complementary to the core academic functions and thus make it a more welcoming area of the City. Similarly, core academic functions located within the City Centre will add to its diversity and help to break down the barriers between the two areas.

The following goals are important in this regard:

- Seek to introduce new activities into the academic area of the University Area that will add to the vibrancy and vitality of the area and complement existing uses.
- Seek to introduce new activities into the accommodation area of the University that will add to its vibrancy and vitality whilst taking into consideration the needs and requirements of the local community.
- Seek to introduce new activities into the ring road area that will increase pedestrian use.
- Consider the appropriateness of introducing core University uses within the City Centre.

## **breaking down barriers**

### **improve the quality of the environment between the university and the city centre and improve connections to other areas of central plymouth**

At present the University is not well integrated with the central area of Plymouth. It is important for the successful working of the University Area and the wider City that better connections are established. The ring road, in particular, has a very poor environment for pedestrians and as such, it is a significant barrier between the University Area and the City Centre. Similarly, North Hill is a barrier between the west and the east of the University Area.

Improving links and connections means developing new routes for the whole community. Moreover, it means creating high quality and stimulating streets that make walking and cycling through the City enjoyable and unthreatening.

The following are important in this regard:

- Improve connections between the University Area, the City Centre, Armada Way and The Hoe.
- Improve connections between the University Area and Sutton Harbour.
- Improve connections between the University Area and the railway station.
- Improve connections between the University Area and Stonehouse.
- Break the barrier to pedestrians created by the ring road.
- Introduce pedestrian routes across the ring road instead of pedestrian subways.
- Green the ring road. Develop a boulevard which is highly landscaped and offers a humane environment for pedestrians.
- Seek to occupy buildings on the ring road with a diverse range of activities to encourage more people to use the street.
- Improve the arrangement of the Drakes Circus, North Cross and Charles Cross roundabouts and break down the barriers to pedestrians that they currently create.
- Reconnect Charles Cross Church with the City Centre, in an area of accessible public open space.
- Break down the barrier created by North Hill by introducing new connections between the west and east of the University Area.

## **better streets and public spaces**

### **create a new hierarchy of high quality streets and public spaces**

The quality of streets and public spaces in the University Area are generally poor. This is particularly true in the academic area. The 'public realm' or the spaces in between buildings, is not well structured here. There are many spaces that do not have a positive role. High quality spaces that provide dynamic gathering places do not exist. It can be difficult for pedestrians to orientate themselves within this environment.

Re-structuring the 'public realm' throughout the University Area, creating superbly landscaped streets, spaces and squares, will have a substantial impact upon the identity, image and quality of the environment. The recent creation of new spaces and landscape around the Peninsula Medical School give a hint as to what is possible.

The following goals are important in this regard:

- Create a good quality environment where buildings and spaces fit well together.
- Develop a distinctive north-south and east-west grid of streets that help to connect the University Area with neighbouring areas of the City.
- Create a distinctive pedestrian route running east-west through the centre of the University Area.
- Create a grand square with a new and dramatic public open space at the 'heart' of the area centred on North Hill.
- Create a new public space for the academic core of the University Area with a new focus for the library/Student Union.
- Create a new public space for the residential area of the University with a new focus at Tavistock Place.
- Establish the Drake's Place Reservoir as a new area of public space. A community and University asset.
- Enhance the environment of Drake's Place Park.
- Green the University Area by introducing landscaping that is distinctively urban in character – reinforcing the new grid of streets and spaces.
- Create distinctive street furniture and signage for the area.

- Develop opportunities for the lighting of buildings and spaces.
- Promote opportunities for public art.

## **Pedestrians first**

### **Create an environment where pedestrians and cyclists have priority**

Many of the streets in the University Area are dominated by traffic and this has a major bearing on the poor quality of the 'public realm'. Surface level car parking occupies many of the spaces between buildings.

The relationship between pedestrians and traffic needs to be looked at and new transport management measures need to be introduced to create a campus that puts pedestrians and cyclists first.

Options for achieving greater pedestrian priority and revised traffic management will be explored through the use of the Paramics transport simulation model to ensure that any proposals can be accommodated within the existing road network.

Achieving pedestrian priority will have an enormous impact upon the quality of the University environment.

The following are important in this regard:

- Create pedestrian and cycle priority in streets and spaces throughout the University Area.
- Reorganise car parking arrangements. Concentrate car parking at identified sites and consider for example, underground parking.
- Ensure all areas are accessible for people with disabilities.
- Maintain and manage access for service and emergency vehicles.
- Consider the implications of achieving pedestrian priority, and revised traffic management including impact upon the wider transport network.
- Create alternatives to car travel. Investigate the role of public transport e.g. through the University Green Travel Plan.
- Provide secure facilities for cycle storage and other facilities required by cyclists.
- Consider the potential for creating pedestrian priority on North Hill.

## **a cultural quarter**

### **create a distinctive 'cultural quarter' centred on north hill.**

A Steering Group has now been established to develop the idea of creating a new Cultural and Creative Industries Quarter for Plymouth centred on North Hill at the 'heart' of the University Area. The Cultural Quarter should focus on cultural research, learning and visual arts that should help the City to deliver key cultural and urban objectives, particularly through the development of a critical mass of attractions and opportunities. The Cultural Quarter should be fully integrated with the wider City and with the Region.

The proposed Quarter will build upon existing cultural assets in the area provided by the University, the College of Art and Design, the Museum and Art Gallery and the City Library.

The development of a Cultural Quarter will add positively to the University area. Its success will be very much entwined with the success of the other Strategic Objectives of the University Partnership.

A stimulating environment is an important part of the Cultural Quarter. It needs to be a strong landmark for the City, which links with the proposed grand open space centred on North Hill.

A feasibility study is currently being prepared for the proposed Cultural Quarter. The information from this feasibility study will be used to develop the Master Plan.

## **quality buildings**

### **conserve the best historic buildings and introduce new high quality architecture**

The quality of architecture in an area has a significant bearing on the quality of the environment. The buildings within the University Area vary greatly in architectural quality.

There are many examples of very good architecture within the area, but these are intermixed with poorer examples. Most good examples are pre-war and from the Nineteenth Century.

Important buildings in the area include: Portland Villas, the Scott Building, the Reynolds Building, Sherwell Church, Drake's Place Reservoir, the City Museum and Art Gallery, the City Library and Annexe, and a number of fine historic terraces. Of more recent buildings, the Peninsula Medical School is an exciting example of good contemporary design.

There are also many examples of poor/ mediocre architecture. These are generally post-war buildings.

It is important that the new buildings in the area are highly regarded in the future and that the best of the existing buildings are conserved for future generations.

The following are important in this regard:

- Conserve important historic buildings and structures.
- Ensure new buildings and improvements to existing buildings represent good quality architecture.
- Ensure new buildings are sustainable in their design and are capable of adaptation for alternative future uses.
- A phased programme for development should be prepared.
- New architecture should complement the new layout of streets, public spaces and existing buildings.

## **better gateways**

### **establish positive gateways between the university and neighbouring areas of the city**

There are a number of important entrances or gateway points into the University Area. These are important places as they create the first impression of the area for many people. They have a key role in contributing to the image of the University.

For this reason it is important that the arrangement of buildings and spaces in gateway locations creates a positive environment that performs a number of roles.

Gateways should provide a transition between distinctive areas of the City. These can be defined in different ways, for example through the quality of buildings, distinctive landscaping, signage or public art features.

Whether arriving as a pedestrian, cyclist, by bus, train or car existing gateways to the University do not perform these important roles well and need to be improved.

The following are important in this regard:

- Improve gateways to the University Area on North Hill.
- Improve the gateway to the University Area from the Railway Station and from Armada Way at North Cross.
- Improve the gateway to the University Area at Drake Circus.
- Improve the gateway to the University Area at Charles Cross.
- Improve the gateway to the University Area on North Road East.

## **Improved skyline**

### **Create a distinctive skyline for central plymouth**

The University area is very visible from different vantage points across the City. Some of the higher buildings such as the Davy Building and the new Peninsula Medical School perform an important role in marking the University area and the City Centre within Plymouth.

The scale of new buildings in the area should generally relate to existing and proposed streets and spaces.

There is an opportunity however to build upon the presence of existing landmarks to create a new and distinctive skyline. A distinctive skyline with landmark buildings can help people to orientate themselves within the City and give the City a sense of character and uniqueness.

At key positions within the University Area (such as at some gateways for example) it might therefore be appropriate to introduce buildings that mark their location and function as new landmarks.

Some existing tall buildings, such as the Mary Newman Building are not positive landmarks for the University. Opportunities should be explored for improving the appearance of such buildings.

## **next steps**

The adoption of the goals is the first stage in the preparation of the Master Plan for the University Area. The goals will now feed into the development of the Master Plan and its associated Action/ Implementation Plan for the future enhancement of the University Area.

The Master Plan will comprise four distinct elements:

- A Development and Accommodation Plan
- A Transportation Plan
- A Public Realm Plan
- An Action/Implementation Plan

A number of interest groups are involved in the development of the draft Master Plan and it is anticipated that it will be completed by the end of December 2003.

The draft Master Plan will be brought to the City Council's Executive Committee to be approved subject to public consultation early in 2004.

Following public consultation, the draft Master Plan will be amended as appropriate.

It is intended that the Master Plan will eventually be adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance, supplementing Policy 55 'University of Plymouth Campus and Surrounding Area' of the City of Plymouth Local Plan First Deposit (1995-2011).