

7 Comparison of Options

7.1 Assessment of the Options

The Gateway is clearly an area of great potential but also one with significant problems. Our analysis showed that at present the situation is problematic and that with future growth and development of the city this situation, particularly with regard to traffic congestion, is bound to be aggravated. The quality of the urban environment is intrinsically linked to traffic issues in the area.

It quickly became apparent that standing still was not an option: something is needed in the area to alleviate these growing problems. The question became: What level of intervention can best respond to the complex demands of this area of the city? We established three options representing three levels of intervention:

- The Do-Minimum Option
- The Intermediate Option
- The Do-Maximum Option

We established key areas of concern through analysis and consequently have assessed each option accordingly as to the success of:

- 1 The transport solution the option offers both to the local community and to the city as a whole, paying particular attention to the option's ability to deal with possible development to the east of the Plym;
- 2 The quality of the environment which is created locally;
- 3 The quality of the gateway which is created for Plymouth as a whole;
- 4 The ability of the option to generate (high quality) development and its approach to key sites within the area.

These issues are clearly interrelated and so are shown in More detail in Table 9.

7.2 Views and the gateway

The Do-Minimum Option performs badly in terms of improving the city gateway. Artworks would be a welcome addition which could have a considerable impact but would only be truly meaningful if part of a thorough public realm strategy. If the large areas of undeveloped or under-used sites do not change, the fundamental character problems of the area will not have been addressed.

The Intermediate and Do-Maximum Options tackle the critical first impression of the visitor to Plymouth by addressing the quality of the route into the city, and clearly defining one or a series of gateway points in the progression to the city centre. The waterfront could become a potentially vibrant place in both the Do-Maximum and the Intermediate Options, flanked by residential and other leisure activities and connected to a series of green links. However the need to retain routes through the East End in the Intermediate Option would detract from the arrival experience of this option.

The quality of the arrival experience in the two options can be qualified further. The Intermediate Option provides a new public transport bridge alongside the existing Laira Bridge. Although this puts all crossings in one location, the crossing is unlikely to be elegant given that several bridges would be positioned together. The Do-Maximum Option on the other hand provides the opportunity for a spectacular new crossing. If this new bridge were designed with imagination, this could in itself be a superb gateway to Plymouth, for those arriving over it, or for those seeing it from the Embankment Road approach.

07 Comparison of Options

7.3 Transport

In terms of transport, all of the options being considered are likely to bring about some disbenefits in terms of travel speeds and journey times for private car through trips in the study area simply because there is a high level of service currently for these trips. Based on the work carried out thus far it is impossible to bring about significant benefits for the people living and working in the study area without disbenefits for longer distance car trips. The scale of the disbenefit is exaggerated in the current work because the entire journey for the longer distance trips is not part of the consideration at this stage; only the section of the journey through the study area.

However only the Do-Maximum Option has a positive effect on traffic congestion: all the other options make no improvement in congestion terms. This also affects how the options perform in terms of the local environment they create.

7.3.1 Development in the east

It is against this issue that the options most significantly differ. The Do-Minimum Option clearly is ill-equipped to deal with further development. It would in fact aggravate the situation considerably since measures are only geared to improve pedestrian and environmental conditions for the local community.

The Intermediate Option would provide reduced flow along Laira Bridge Road (west) but reduction on the bridge itself would be minimal. Public transport access from the east would be improved but overall the option would not be equipped to deal with major new development to the east of the Plym.

It is clear from this analysis that the issue of the long term future of the city and the level of intervention appropriate are closely associated.

Not only is the Do-Maximum Option the only option which is able to address the issue of future flows (without development in the east) but it is also the only option that is robust enough to be considered alongside development east of the Plym. These two issues, potential development to the east of the Plym and the choice of option in the gateway area are entirely inter-related and a decision cannot be made on either independent of the other.

7.4 Local Environment

The effect on the local environment of each of these options is critical to the success of the gateway area. The benefits and impacts on the community of each measure need to be thoroughly assessed. Table 8 analyses the benefits and impacts for each of the options.

The traffic measures in the Intermediate Option fail to really make any change on the traffic congestion in the area. The local environment would continue to be blighted by traffic problems.

In terms of the local urban environment it is clear that the Do-Maximum Option has the potential to create an environment which is least fragmented by roads allowing for many roads to be transformed by reduced vehicle numbers and improvements to the pedestrian environment and crossings. Areas of the local community currently cut off, one from the other, would be able to reconnect and Embankment Road (west) could become a successful local centre once more, served by public transport but not blighted by high levels of traffic.

EFFECT	THE OPTIONS		
	Do-Minimum	Intermediate	Do-Maximum
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pedestrian crossings Public transport priorities New green links to the waterfront Consolidation and rationalisation of any future retail proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pedestrian crossings Public transport priorities New open space network with links to waterfront Consolidation of retail and relocation of some incompatible industrial uses Improved sense of place Lively waterfront promenade fronted by mixed-use area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HGV through-movement removed Improved pedestrian crossings Public transport priorities New Open space network with links to waterfront Improved urban environment and sense of place Consolidation of retail and relocation of some incompatible industrial uses Lively waterfront promenade fronted by mixed-use area Reduced traffic impact on local community Better linkages across the community and to the waterfront Potential for very strong sense of place
IMPACTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued traffic blight with traffic flows predicted to increase Character of vacant and industrial land continues If development occurs in the east, traffic blight will be further aggravated to unacceptable levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued traffic congestion Continued severance of communities by east-west routes All route options are problematic. Retaining routes through the East End creates congestion. If development occurs in the east, traffic blight will be further aggravated to unacceptable levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some impact in immediate locality caused by new route to be addressed by careful design.

Table 8: Benefits and Impacts for the local communities

07 Comparison of Options

The Do-Minimum Option would only achieve superficial 'cosmetic' improvements. By not effectively tackling traffic and the potential of the waterfront, the local communities are unlikely to see any effective change to the quality of their environment.

7.5 Development Potential and approach to key sites

The Do-Maximum Option provides the opportunity for significant new development and redevelopment to occur. The size of the development sites created will result in the emergence of new market opportunities, each of which are capable of releasing substantial latent value. This will prove attractive to the major development organisations and institutional investors who will be required to facilitate implementation.

In the absence of a highly proactive option, the operation of market forces is unlikely to bring about any significant change other than on a site by site basis. Consequently, there would not be any substantial change in the current land use patterns.

The release of major water frontage sites for development and the re-ordering of commercial uses to more appropriate locations are major attractions of the Intermediate and especially the Do-Maximum Option. This in turn would release further redevelopment options, each bringing added value to the property dynamics of the study area. Congestion problems in the Intermediate Option could affect the image and marketability of the area. The Do-Maximum Option provides the potential for the highest quality environment and stronger market.

The diversion of significant amounts of traffic to the northern route in the Do-Maximum Option brings a number of sites with especially attractive and potentially desirable waterside locations.

7.6 Conclusions of the Assessment

Clearly the options shown are indicative of the scale of measures required. Further investigation and development will be needed, particularly with regard to transport, before a detailed design can be developed. However with current available information and knowledge a hierarchy between the options has been established and a direction can be recommended to guide the future investigative work now required.

A summary of the assessment of each option against key criteria is given in Table 9. The table shows clearly the Do-Maximum Option is the only option which meets the objectives set out at the beginning of the study.

In terms of the visual gateway produced, the Do-Maximum Option produces by far the most impressive change. In terms of the urban environment created the Do-Maximum Option and the Intermediate Option improve the urban environment because high quality development will be encouraged. However it is on transport and environment issues that the Do-Maximum is categorically superior to all others and the only effective option. It is the only option which improves the local environment significantly since it is the only one which thoroughly addresses congestion of through traffic in a local residential setting. It is the only option which will stand the test of time as traffic flows are predicted to increase and critically it is the only option which can be considered if development is to take place east of the Plym.

This study recommends that the Do-Maximum Option is further developed and investigated as it is the only option which fulfills the criteria set out at the start of the study.

THE CRITERIA	How well does each option address the following issues?	THE OPTIONS		
		Do-Minimum	Intermediate	Do-Maximum
VISUAL GATEWAY QUALITY	Provides an impressive new gateway to Plymouth?	•	••	•••
	Makes best use of the views from the site?		•••	•••
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	Provides opportunities for high quality development?		••	•••
	Provides opportunities for a lively waterfront?		••	•••
	Provides opportunities for high quality open space and amenity?	•	••	•••
	Provides an improved living environment for the local communities?	•	••	•••
TRANSPORT	Provides traffic improvements for the local communities?	•	•	•••
	Provides a successful transport solution?		•	•••
	Provides a transport solution suitable for development east of the Plym?			•••
VIABILITY	Provides development potential?	•	••	•••

Table 9: Comparison of the options on key issues