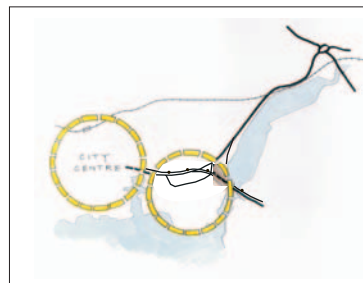
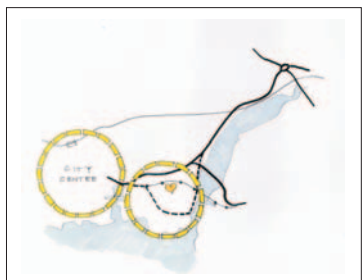


The Do-Minimum Option



The Intermediate Option



The Do-Maximum Option

Figure 9.1: Summary of the development concept options. The Do-Minimum Option achieves no improvement to the current congested gateway. The Intermediate approach has some merits but does not improve congestion at the western end of Laira Bridge. The Do-Maximum Option provides a smooth route away from local communities.

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9.1 Review of Main findings

We asked the question: ‘What level of intervention is necessary to provide an improved gateway, solutions to transport problems and a better living environment in the Plymouth Eastern Gateway area?’

It is apparent that due to growing pressure on the area a Do-Nothing or a Do-Minimum approach is not an appropriate response. Plymouth's current congestion levels may not appear to be as severe as some other locations in the UK but there is little doubt that the impact of road traffic on daily life in the Gateway Area is significant. Without proactive action, the pressures can only worsen as traffic continues to increase. As the traffic pressures increase, congestion within the Gateway will worsen and the area affected will expand.

Transport issues are directly associated with the quality of the local environment and also have an effect on the wider environment which develops around it; the waterside area is dominated by under-utilised land, which appeals only to uses which prioritise high accessibility and need only low environmental conditions. Unless transport issues are satisfactorily addressed, there will be no significant improvement in the local environment.

The Paramics model testing has demonstrated that re-configuration of the road network accompanied by a combination of new infrastructure and public transport priorities can achieve a comparable level of service to the current situation. In terms of road infrastructure this would not therefore necessarily mean more capacity but would involve replacing some existing roads with new roads on a different alignment as indicated in the Do-Maximum Option. To date, this preferred option,

involves closing off Embankment Road (west) and Gdynia Way to private through traffic, re-routing the freight rail line to the Port so that the section to Friary Station is removed, creating a new road into the city along the former rail line to Friary Park and building a new bridge to link with the new route across the Plym to the north of the existing bridge. The proposal is geared towards increasing public transport access to and from the city centre and achieves this by creating additional capacity for this mode in Embankment Road (west) and Laira Bridge.

Although the Intermediate Option produced development opportunities, its predicted inability to address congestion in the area, effectively means that the most major problem for the area has not been addressed. The Do-Maximum Option is the only option which can improve conditions within the study area whilst also creating an improved gateway for the city.

Alongside these proposals it also became clear that the vision for the gateway must be carried forward within a broader city-wide framework and that decisions regarding development east of the city are directly interrelated with the need to pursue a Do-Maximum approach.

Over and above predicted traffic increase, the planned eastern developments in the wider Plymouth Travel to Work Area will generate further additional demand for movement in the corridors within and through the Gateway area. Whilst wider policy initiatives will seek to encourage switches to public transport and reduce car dependency (accompanied by more responsible use), only the extreme optimist would suggest that traffic volumes will not increase irrespective of the level of success on these other fronts.

The study demonstrates that any initiatives towards development east of the Plym are intrinsically linked to decisions about the Gateway. Current work shows that

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only a highly proactive Do-Maximum approach can be realistically considered if development east of the Plym is to take place. Decisions regarding these two city initiatives must also be taken with an awareness of their interdependence.

The study asked ‘Which level of intervention is required for real change in the gateway area?’. The underlying question is whether the various demands from beyond the area can be accommodated whilst, at the same time, improving the quality of life for those who work, live and play in the Gateway area.

9.2 Main recommendations

The study outputs are suggesting, in transport, urban design and market appraisal terms that a step-change in quality of life and in the quality of the gateway for those arriving in Plymouth can only be achieved with a significant re-modelling of the urban design structure.

A highly proactive Do-Maximum approach is required and should be investigated further. From our investigations during this study no lesser level of intervention succeeded adequately enough to be considered as an ultimate goal.

The key recommendations of the study are that:

- There is only one reasonable way ahead which meets all the study objectives and which is both practical and in keeping with the status of the city. This is the Do-Maximum approach and should be investigated further;
- Moving towards the implementation of the scheme as fast and efficiently as possible is essential otherwise its realisation may become compromised to the point of impracticability.

If the Preferred Option is to be achieved, an enormous investment of time, energy, organisation and funds will be required. How this can be achieved and a series of urgent next steps are set out below to guide the process forward.

9.3 Implementation and the next steps

9.3.1 The Overall Task

The conceptual framework for the Eastern Gateway presents a major implementation challenge; it is big, complex, expensive and will take several years to realise. Aspects will be contentious. The reshaping of the developer blocks, transport infrastructure and existing land uses together with improvements in the existing communities involve for example:

- Many property, development and community interests in and around the area;
- Existing and potential planning applications;
- The potential to serve the major proposed developments to the east of the Plym, and
- Integrated design, development and phasing of road, rail and development projects.

It can be judged that the challenge is too demanding to be realisable through the planning system and normal public sector funding mechanisms. In addition, there is potential value capture both within the study area and externally particularly from the major proposed schemes to the east of the estuary.

9.3.2 Funding, Costs and Values

The essence of the task is to create a bankable project where the cost streams essential for the project works are offset over time against the funding sources. The funding sources to be explored should include for example:

- Contributions from developments within the area;
- Contributions from developments benefiting from the new infrastructure which lie outside the area, particularly to the east;
- Transportation (road, rail and public transport) grants and support;
- Environmental Improvements Grants /Support of one sort or another;
- Central Government support through such bodies as SWERDA and English Partnerships, and perhaps
- Institutional investment (eg The English Cities Fund).

The cost streams needing forecasts include civil engineering works for road, bridge, rail, public transport and other infrastructure, land acquisition, relocations, environmental improvements etc.

In addition, development planning work is required in order to decide how to maximise development value (and thus capture) to support the overall venture.

Thus a detailed appraisal is now required. It is essential that this is both a financial and economic appraisal. The wider economic benefits will be important to securing governmental support.

9.3.3 A Delivery Mechanism

There are a series of models of implementation agencies; Urban Regeneration Companies (URC's), Urban Development Companies (UDC's); Public /Private Sector Joint Venture Companies; Private Sector-led ventures with public sector support; development trusts and so on. There are also many variations within these typologies and potential hybrids. In addition, issues such as the use of PFI arise. Deciding upon the appropriate package of mechanisms is a demanding task beyond the resources and time scale of this study. A great deal of analytical work and discussions with stakeholders is

required including the evaluation of alternative models. Our initial view veers towards the URC model (given the complexity and scale of the venture) with development agreements with the other key partners and stakeholders. Discussions at a City and County Council level, with the major landowners/ developers involved and with SWERDA/ EP are now required to establish an approach to determining the delivery mechanisms.

9.3.4 The Next Steps

There is a need for interim arrangements to:

- Handle development control particularly with regard to key sites which are of critical importance to the overall strategy. In particular this affects the former Blagdons Boatyard site, Heywoods Pavings, Kent Holdings land near Laira Bridge, the former Western National bus depot, Morley Properties land, London and West Country Estates land in the Faraday Mill area and the Friary Retail Park on Exeter Street. An interim planning policy statement will be required to ensure that decisions made in the short term on the future of these sites is consistent with the overall long term strategy for the area.
- Progress the project in undertaking the necessary enabling studies and consultations now required.

It is advised that a 'Joint Development Team' of a planner, urban designer, a surveyor and a transportation engineer is established for the interim period (probably the next 2 years). This team should:

- i Prepare a development framework plan for the area, working up the current concept in detail;
- ii Produce urban design and development control

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guidance for use in development control and adoption as SPG;

- iii Conduct the delivery, cost, funding, values, engineering and other studies required to move the project along and establish a delivery capability;
- iv Plan and manage an ongoing consultation process and programme with the public at large and all the public and private sector stakeholders involved;
- v Plan and consult with regard to relocations and site acquisitions. In particular, this is essential with regard to the strategic sites around the Laira Bridge area;
- vi Coordinate with the Sutton Harbour East proposals, the adopted East End Regeneration Strategy Master Plan and other city-wide initiatives, especially the emerging retail and transport strategies.

9.3.5 The Quality Imperative

The eastern approaches to Plymouth alongside and across the Plym estuary are intrinsically attractive with great views over water, coast, landscape and urban form. However, these views are not celebrated by the design quality of the infrastructure and the qualitative sense of arrival is lost once the routes force their way into the housing and industrial areas between the estuary and city centre/ Sutton Harbour.

The new concept can and should be highly celebratory; a better roadside landscape and more accessible shore alongside the estuary; a splendid new bridge (Wilkinson Eyre/ Calatrava perhaps); a well designed new 'gateway' and waterside developments; a new urban boulevard lined by quality landscape and development linking to the city centre; and a new urban block structure re-establishing links from existing communities to the shore and healing the impacts imposed by roads and traffic at present.

There should be a 'Quality Design Imperative' in all this. The opportunity is there for a splendid gateway to the city; and one that helps address important improvement and development objectives. Although this is mentioned earlier, in design terms it bears repeating that the next steps are the parallel production of a development framework plan and of accompanying design guidance to establish the qualitative objectives.

