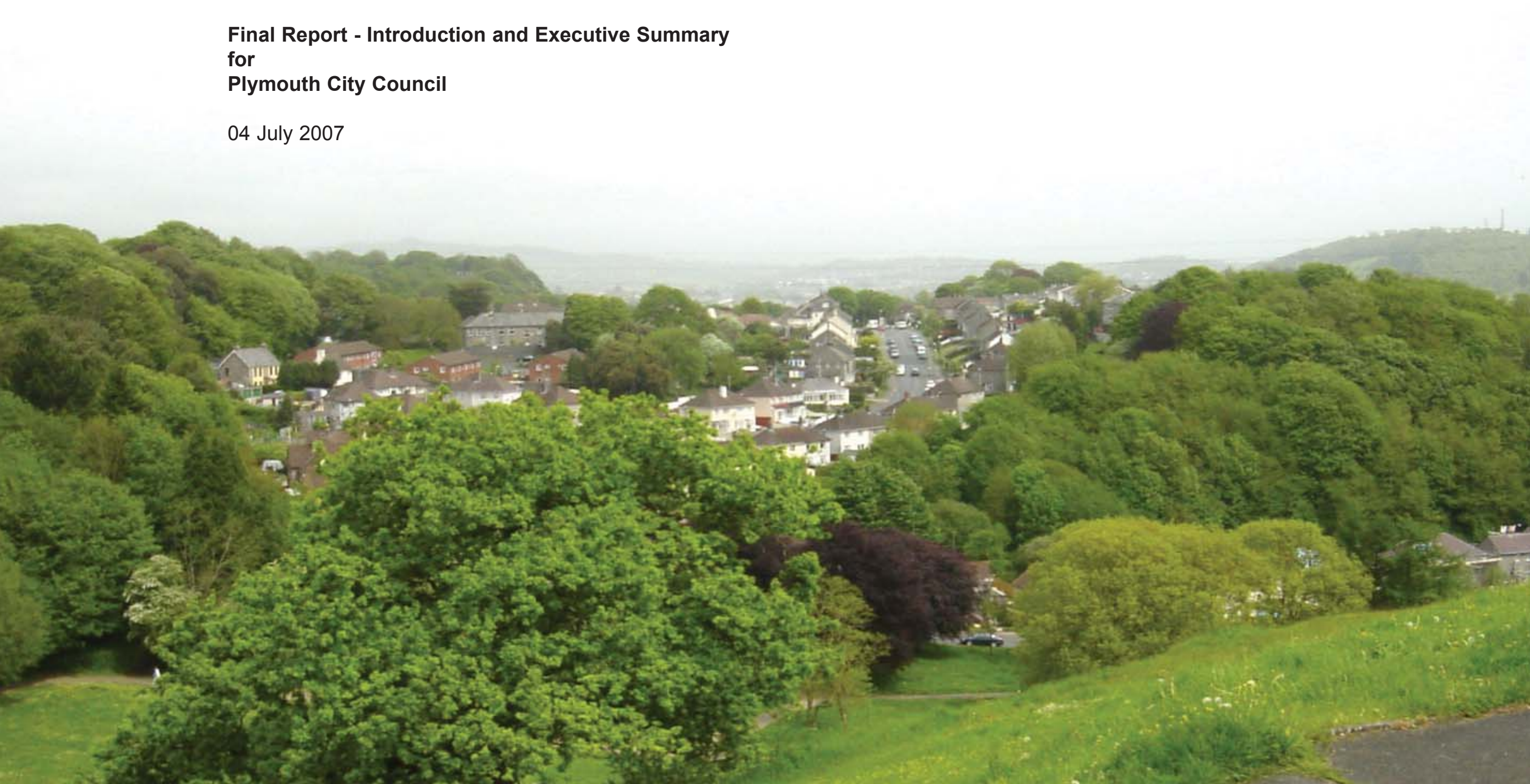


Efford Building Communities Initiative Masterplan

**Final Report - Introduction and Executive Summary  
for  
Plymouth City Council**

04 July 2007



## The Team

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## Introduction

In November 2005, after an exhaustive advertising and thorough selection process Shillam + Smith along with their team of consultants were appointed to undertake the Efford Building Communities Initiative Masterplan. The brief was to “produce a framework and masterplan that will recommend detailed actions and identify support required to implement service improvements and initiatives that secure the long term sustainable future for Efford focused on change in Torridge Way, and to investigate how we can create a strong neighbourhood centre.”

As part of our brief a ‘Framework for Action’, as an agreement between Plymouth City Council (PCC) and the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA) and taking into account a broad range of economic, social and physical factors. The framework provided an outline of areas of work to be addressed in this report:

- Engaging the community through consultation
- Building the capacity of the community through volunteer recruitment to achieve maximum engagement and involvement
- Including young people in innovative and creative consultation
- Audit skills levels and outline actions for raising skills levels, local training and outreach
- Identify and address barriers of employment
- Foster an entrepreneurial spirit and stimulate enterprise working with the business support agencies
- Identify opportunities to develop and support social enterprise solutions for the community particularly for delivery of services
- Identify community safety issues
- Identify key health issues including investigating the scope for local provision of health services
- Identify the opportunities that link sport and play activities to health outcomes
- Achieve a high quality public realm and design quality for all proposed buildings by cooperation between agencies in setting an Urban Design Framework

The final aspiration of our work was to “**achieve a lasting legacy where local delivery of services is undertaken in equal partnership with a viable and locally managed organisation and where opportunities for creation of community assets are maximised**”.

### TEAM

This masterplan is part of the Building Communities Initiative, for which the lead organisations are the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA) and Plymouth City Council. The project was managed by the Neighbourhood Regeneration team of Plymouth City Council’s Housing Strategy and Renewal Division under the able direction of Phil Mitchell, Peter Hopkins (for the first stages) and Debbie Burton. Les Roper provided valuable support from the RDA.

Our team included:

CSC Regeneration and Research Consultants (CSC)  
Plymouth Public Health Development Unit (PHDU)  
Dearle and Henderson Regeneration Economics  
Plymouth Arts Centre

Throughout we have worked closely with the Heart of Efford Community Partnership (HECP) under the chairmanship of Steve Payne. In particular we have had considerable help and support from a core group of partnership members for whose welcome and kind counsel we have been most grateful. Councillors Miller, Vincent and Kerswell are all members of the HECP and we have had a series of meetings with them on a regular basis. All key stakeholders are members of the HECP and have been invited to regular presentations and discussion events throughout the process. MP Linda Gilroy has been involved from the start and offered much welcomed support.

In addition we have worked, met and discussed the project with different groups within and outside the council and on two occasions convened officer group meetings. We have involved many PCC officers throughout the process, in particular Lifelong Learning and Asset Management regarding the provision of a new extended school for Efford.

### PROJECT AND REPORT STRUCTURE

The Efford Building Communities Initiative Report is divided into two parts plus an appendix. This reflects the staged process of our work, where the initial survey and desktop studies and the consultation process form the base for visioning and concluding stages.

Part 1 contains reports on our analysis, a summary of the consultation, a documentation of the public art project and concludes with the investigation of eight spatial options for the development of the neighbourhood.

Part 2 of the report builds directly upon the messages from the extensive consultation process. It presents our vision for Efford 2020 under the title ‘**Efford 2020 - a great place to live**’. Quantities and qualities are defined for this vision and aspirations set. The report concludes with an action and delivery plan.

An executive summary is included at the beginning of Part 2.

The appendix to the Efford Building Communities Initiative Masterplan contains detailed consultants’ reports on Public Health and economic issues together with the statistics of the public consultation. Material of the Public Art Project gives evidence of the broad response to the consultation focused on the local youth.

(Note: This introduction is reproduced from Part1 of the report)

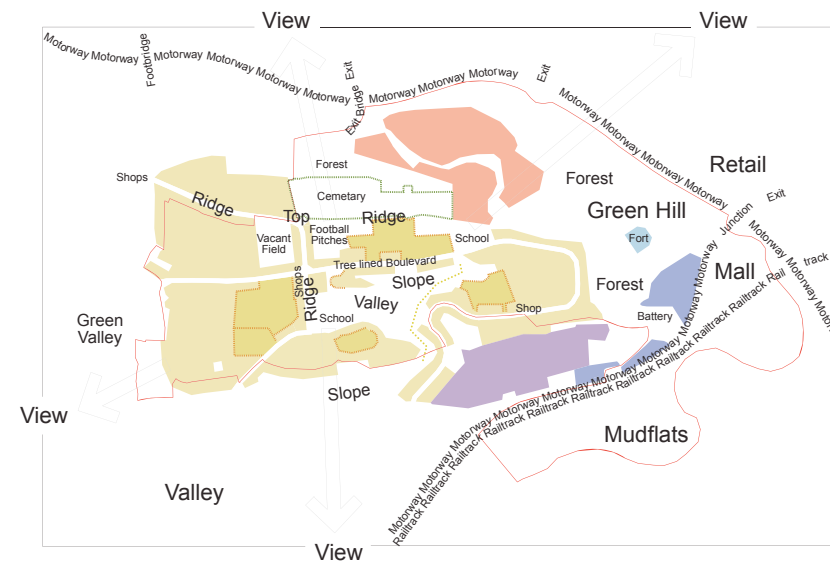
## Executive summary

### ANALYSIS

We commenced our work by making a very thorough spatial survey of the area. Our team walked down every street in the study area and recorded the landscape, townscape and the uses as well as any areas of concern or neglect. We undertook a thorough survey of the history of the area which was subsequently translated into a series of analytical drawings and illustrations. Our analysis concluded by identifying the major areas of concern, which are generally close to but not overlooked by Torridge Way as well as identifying the massive areas of landscape and green which are not well used.

A survey of the economic and educational profile of the neighbourhood and a skills audit undertaken by CSC focuses on employment, skills, entrepreneurial spirit and social enterprise. The aim was to establish clear themes which have a direct impact upon the employment prospects for local people in Efford and to suggest potential ways forward. The survey results for all areas show that both support service practitioners and local people believe that the confidence and esteem of residents needs to be raised. It also highlights the fact that some people within the community need to be further engaged if they are to be able to take a job, become involved in a social enterprise or initiate any entrepreneurial activity. Improving the levels of basic skills held by local people in Efford emerged from the consultation as a key priority.

The "Health and Wellbeing Needs Assessment" (HNA) undertaken by PHDU assessed the broad health needs of the Efford population together with assessing local health (and related) services. The report then considers areas for service improvement in the light of the identified needs (including considering the needs of different groups within the Efford population). In conclusion this section recommends prospective changes to health services, and other changes that may promote well-being. The HNA is clear in concluding that changes in the way services are delivered is required if they are to affect the inter-connected determinants of health and well-being.



Diagrammatic overview of the neighbourhood

### HOUSING

Throughout this study we have been warned that there may be major issues relating to the quality of housing in Efford. Most of the housing was built after the Second World War; Efford was the first new neighbourhood to be constructed under the Abercrombie Plan. However much of the housing was system built and the ongoing maintenance issues related to the housing could become a time-bomb for Efford, as well as for other areas of Plymouth. The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2005 highlights the need for investment as it identifies Efford and Lipson as having the worst stock in the City. The P2020 Index of Deprivation 2006 also refers to Efford's housing as being the third worst level of housing decency.

N.B. the 2006 Index doesn't include private sector housing decency so this is effectively a measure of public sector stock. However, in the 2005 Index which did include private sector housing, Efford was actually ranked No 1, i.e. as having the worst housing conditions across the city. At the time of writing (January 2007) Plymouth City Council has just been given the green-light to consult all Plymouth City Council tenants about the proposed transfer of their homes to a Registered Social Landlord. Council tenants will have the final say on whether the transfer takes place but it will be a way to bring improvements to housing conditions.

### THE SUBURBAN NATURE OF EFFORD

Much of the housing is semi-detached, within generous gardens and constitutes a typical mid 20th century suburban style. This rather low density model has proved difficult to serve with facilities and transportation. This fact is made more noticeable because Efford is in effect an island. The A38, the railway line and the topography serves to cut it off from Plymouth City Centre and its hinterland. In fact the topography – Efford's location at the top of a deeply indented hill, with ravines to the north and east – has resulted in a form which is more reminiscent of a Swiss hill-town than an English city suburb. Time and again in our work we have identified this topography as a critical constraint to improving connections and access.

Socially Efford seems isolated from the rest of Plymouth. There are very strong family and social ties here which have been presented to us as a strength. However, sometimes these social mores hide deeper problems and almost tribal loyalties which may sometimes seem to be misplaced. For example we have been told that amongst some sections of the community truancy, underage drinking, smoking and drug abuse is condoned by adults and even some parents.



'Suburban Efford - View from Pike Road to Efford Valley



'Suburban Efford - View from Blandford Road south

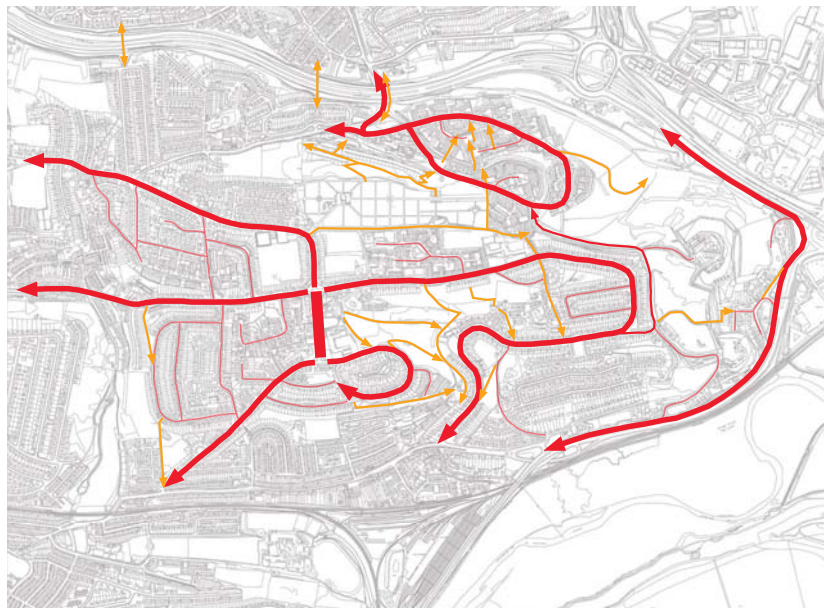


Diagram of connections in Efford - highlighting the isolated nature of Efford (see report part 1, page 14 for further analysis)



Diagram of uses other than housing - highlighting the green nature of the neighbourhood with Efford Valley at its heart (see report part 1, page 16 for further analysis)

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Our main consultation revolved around a series of focus groups, workshops and events organised around the location of "The Purple Pod". The Purple Pod was a brightly coloured and especially converted container from where we dispensed hot drinks and healthy snacks and where we encouraged the public to take part in a series of very detailed questionnaires. The purple pod was opened by the local MP Linda Gilroy with the help of Torridge Way's eldest resident and its youngest school pupil. Refer to report part 1, chapter 3.0 for a summary of the consultation outcome and the appendix for full details of consultation results.



Public consultation inside the Purple Pod

Our early work indicated a clear need to understand the youth issues in Efford and encouraged the client to allow us to extend the consultation to include the work of five artists helping us gain the trust and support of the younger generation.

The HECP created an action group to assist with the public consultation and with the artists. The outcome of this work has strengthened the community process, given the partnership a sense of ownership of the project as well as given a flavour of achievement to the process.

We have over 100 detailed questionnaires, of which a much higher proportion than normal have been filled in by young people. As well as formal questionnaires we have a wealth of information on all topics from our consultants and from the artists who each in their own way added to the depth and quality of our knowledge about Efford and the community.

#### YOUTH ISSUES

As the consultation progressed we began to realise that so much of Efford's problems stemmed from issues surrounding children and young people. Issues such as low educational attainment, family breakdown, child abuse, parenting problems, economic problems and health seem to coalesce into a sticky glue of problems which commence when children are small and then refuse to dilute as they grow up. These factors result in a community which is, at least metaphorically, "on the edge of a nervous breakdown". Although Efford moved from 6th to 7th overall rank in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, individual cases and observations throughout the masterplanning process led us to believe that there is a real risk of residents quality of life issues deteriorating. Educational under-achievement, poor health, crime, insecurity and unemployment statistics are all rising and we observe only isolated situations where measures are being taken to help families reduce their problems. One ray of hope has been the recent opening of a children's centre which helps children and parents of the under fives. Many agencies and organisations within Efford, in particular the schools, the churches, the post offices and the new neighbourhood police, are all providing support. However they are all working to a greater or lesser degree in isolation.

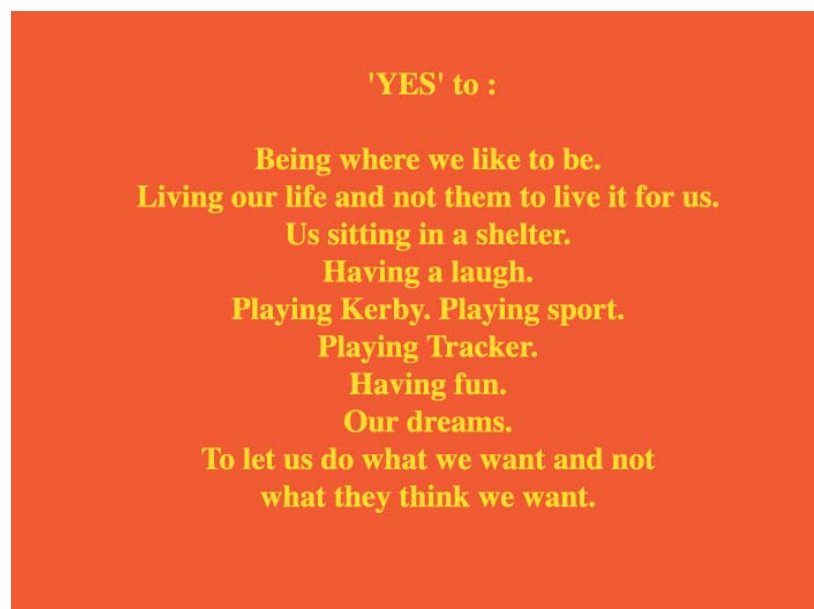
Every single person we interviewed mentioned the youth issue as being of importance.



Consultation inside 'The Purple Pod'



Questionnaire result: Think how Torridge Way might look in 20 years time



YES/NO places, quotations collected from children by artist Jayne Murray



Youth giving their views after dance workshop with artist Sue Smith

## VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND ASPIRATION

Our vision for Efford in 2020 is presented under the title “**Efford 2020 – a great place to live**”.

The vision anticipates that Efford in 2020 will become a safe and enjoyable place to bring up a family. It will be a green and beautiful neighbourhood and one where the housing is considerably improved. We have outlined our vision under the sub-headings:

- Economically successful neighbourhood
- Empowered community
- Healthy neighbourhood
- Caring, strong and outward looking community

This report continues by outlining six guiding principles against which all changes and activity should be measured. These qualities are:

- Connection
- Activity
- Celebration
- Economy
- Focus
- Quality

In the next section we have detailed our aspiration for Efford, looking in more detail at issues such as

- Use of parks and playing fields
- Nature of the neighbourhood centre
- Density and form of new development
- Aspirations for a new extended school.



Development Option 6A - working model

## ACTIONS AND DELIVERY PLAN

In the final section of this report we have recommended a series of activities that we believe would start the process of change in Efford. Within the delivery plan we outline how these actions and processes would combine to form a coherent strategic framework.

We consider that support for implementation of the Master Plan would come from various sources and we have attempted to outline the support available although we are acutely aware of budgetary pressures that exist across sectors, especially within Plymouth City Council. We recognise that inter-agency working is crucial to the success of the Master Plan implementation and is something that is already underway.

Support is also forthcoming from the HECP who have a tough role in bringing different sectors together and will therefore need continued and additional support. It is for this reason that the HECP, with support from PCC and the Plymouth Arts Centre, are pulling together a 5-year programme of (mainly Lottery) funding to provide some dedicated support for the HECP to assist in engaging the community and ensuring the Master Plan is delivered. We feel that the successful outcome of the vision rests on the ability of the HECP to maintain its drive and focus and that a continued package of eternal funding will be of fundamental importance.

## OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Exploring options for physical change in Efford, in particular Torrridge Way, was a key part of the Master Plan. LDA options illustrating a new school on Torrridge Way at the Heart of the Community had previously been presented, yet, from early discussions with Plymouth City Council's Children's Services this was not considered to be the only option.

The Efford Master Plan is far more than the issue of a new school but it has been recognised that a new school for Efford is a crucial aspect of the regeneration of Efford. Provision of a single, amalgamated 1.5 form entry school for Efford has been considered as part of the Master Planning process and a range of sketch options have been produced, incorporating other aspects of physical change. (Refer to Options in Part 1 of the report)

An evaluation of these options by Children's Services and Asset Management indicates that a new build on the Highfield Site is the preferred option. Further more detailed options (refer to 6a and 6b in Part 1) illustrating how this might be achieved have been prepared, including Children's Services / Asset Management's preferred approach which places the building right at the heart of the community activity on Torrridge Way.

During March and April 2007 Plymouth City Council, in partnership with the school Governors and the Heart of Efford Community Partnership, started the consultation process 'to merge Highfield and Plym View Primary Schools in September 2010 and house them in a brand new, state-of-the-art school with community facilities at the heart of Efford on a site yet to be chosen'.

Our interim conclusions, presented at the beginning of November presented six options based around different land uses but all underpinned by a vision of Efford in 2020. Under advice that the Highfield School site had been earmarked as the most likely place for the development of the school we were advised to increase our design options around this site. In this report we present eight different spatial options for Efford. Whichever location is decided upon the design should adhere to the Vision and Guiding Principles of this report, which becomes a basis for the new schools brief.

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