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City Centre Area Action Plan

Issues & Options

This document has been produced by the City Council as a part of the first stage in preparing Plymouth's new Local Development Framework (LDF).

Plymouth is experiencing a period of significant change. There is a real expectation of improving the quality of people's lives in a way that truly reflects the aspirations of local communities. Significant developments are already underway to deliver key elements of this vision. Further major opportunities are coming forward. We need your help to evolve a Development Framework to manage these changes effectively.

In order to shape the content of this new development framework, we would like to know:-

- **What sort of Plymouth do you want to see in the future?**
The answers to this question will shape the 'Core Strategy' document which outlines how the city will evolve over the next ten or more years.
- **What changes, if any, need to be made in your area to help improve it?**
The answers to this question will shape the 'City Centre/ Railway Station and University Area Action Plan' which will show in detail how significant changes in this area will re-create this area as an essential part of Plymouth's urban renaissance agenda.

This document is intended to generate discussion about the issues and opportunities in the City Centre/ Railway Station and University area. It is not intended to be site specific, but rather to try and identify the more important strategic issues which will help to shape the way the area develops in the future.

Detailed guidance for this area will be produced in the second tranche of Area Action Plan (AAP) preparation. The greatest need is for guidance in those areas where major investment is about to take place (Devonport, Millbay & North Plymstock), as well as areas where there is limited guidance in current plans (Derriford, Seaton & Southway). In the case of the City Centre it is accepted that the guidance in the current Local Plan & First Deposit Local Plan should enable satisfactory progress in the interim.

The timetable for its production is that:

- Detailed policies and proposals will be generated as a result of this consultation, which in turn will be consulted on in January/February 2006
- leading to the submission of the City Centre/ Railway Station and University Area Action Plan to the Secretary of State by October/November 2006

**We need your views to help us shape the Area Action Plan for the City Centre/
Railway Station and University**

City Centre, Railway Station and University Area

The City Centre is the face of Plymouth. Its role is vital in the economic and social well being of the whole city and sub region. This Area Action Plan encompasses the city's main railway station and the main University of Plymouth campus, as well as the city's central shopping precinct. The First Deposit version of the *City of Plymouth Local Plan (1995 – 2011)* identified considerable potential for



improvement and regeneration. The *City Centre Precinct Urban Design Framework*, which is adopted as supplementary planning guidance, was produced in order to help realise the visions for the City Centre.

In the last two years considerable work has been done focussing on the City Centre. The 2020 partnership commissioned the Mackay Vision, which consolidates within one document a vision for the future development of the city. The City Council has adopted the principles of the vision as an Interim Planning Statement.

As a result of Mackay's work new proposals for the City Centre need to be examined, and previously identified proposals (in the First Deposit of the Local Plan) should be updated/ re-examined.

Issues and Opportunities

For many years the City Centre suffered from a lack of commercial investment and a poor image, and it underperformed as a retail centre. Recently a new dynamism and confidence has emerged which is resulting in renewed interest and investment. This AAP picks up the challenge to build on the agenda of change, to help to deliver a vibrant and thriving city centre.

Issues to be considered in relation to the City Centre include:-

- How to ensure a better balance of uses, avoiding an over-emphasis on shopping and daytime uses?
- How to bring more life to the area, particularly at weekends and in the evening?
- How to modernise the stock of office accommodation?
- How should Armada Way evolve, bearing in mind its various roles as a shopping street, civic space, and pedestrian/transport route.
- How to increase the supply of housing?
- How to improve the quality of townscape at the northern end of the precinct?
- How to create smaller block sizes to facilitate pedestrian movement north and south through the precinct?
- How to improve protection from poor weather?
- How to achieve a better relationship between building heights and street width?
- How to improve the transport gateways into the area, including the railway station, the car parks and other public transport facilities?
- How to strengthen the City Centre's relationship to the railway station and the University?
- How to provide a balanced retail structure between the east and west ends of the area?
- How to improve the relationship and connections with surrounding areas / neighbourhoods?

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- How to make the roads within and around the City Centre more pedestrian friendly and less cluttered?
 - How to improve the relationship between the University and the City Centre?
 - How to improve the cultural offer of the City Centre and University, supporting the growth of cultural activities?
 - How to make better use of vacant or under-utilized land?











The Vision

To create a lively and vibrant mixed use regional centre which provides high quality regional shopping, together with a range of facilities for living, working and recreation, both by day and night.



It should be well connected with adjacent areas, and to the city and region beyond. It should blend seamlessly with surrounding neighbourhoods, including the University area and Cultural Quarter, through direct and safe pedestrian routes and through easily accessible and convenient public transport.

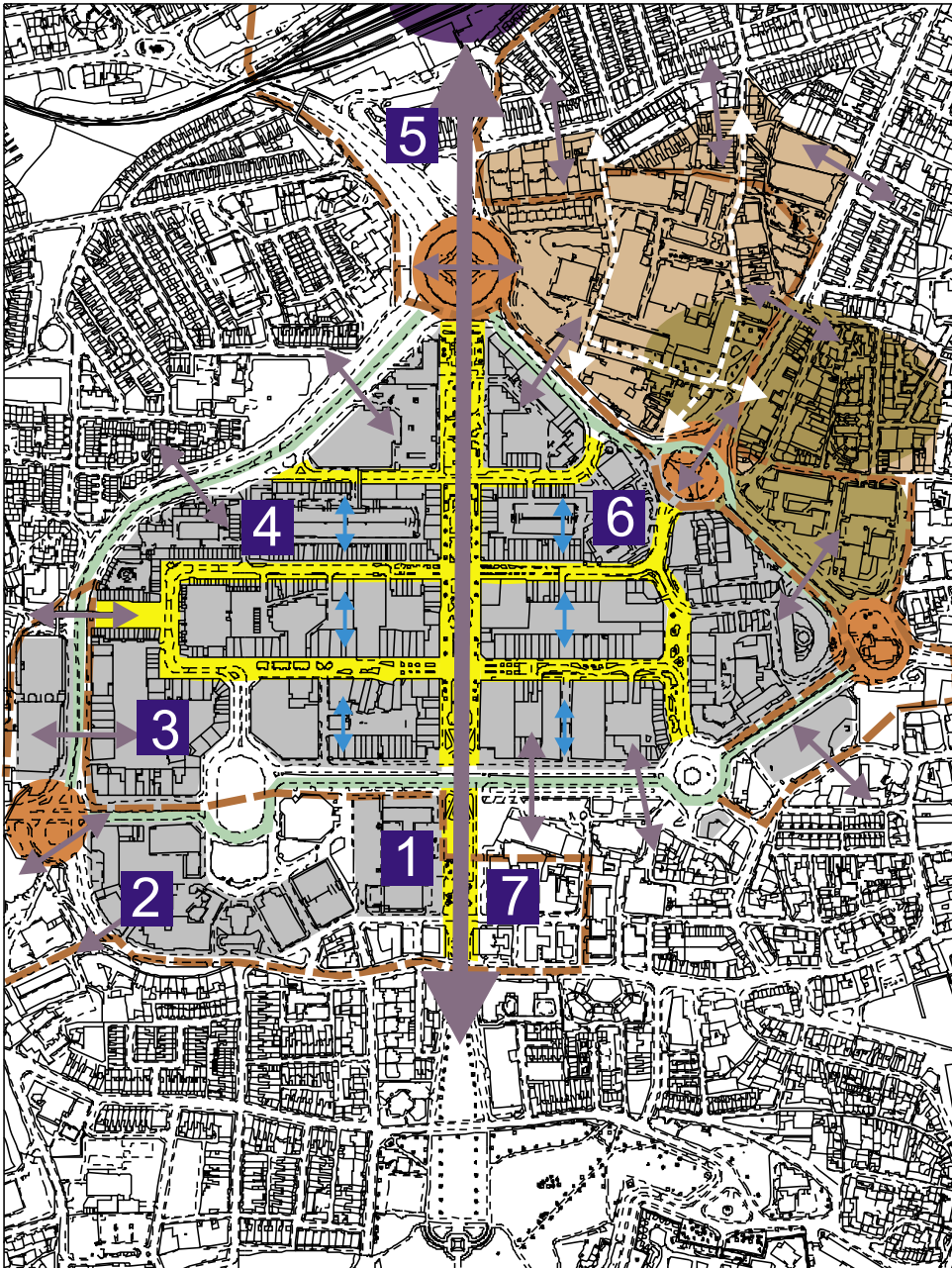
It is about making the City Centre a real downtown, offering residents and visitors 24-hour life, with restaurants, pubs, specialized shops, a choice of entertainment and culture. It should have quiet areas but enough activity at all times to make it feel safe

The Vision - To create a vibrant mixed use regenerated regional centre which provides high quality shopping together with a range of facilities for living and working both by day and night.

-  University / Cultural Quarter.
-  Cultural Quarter.
-  Key arrival spaces with opportunity for landmark buildings.
-  Zones of opportunity for tall building placement.
-  New, better defined routes through the University campus.
-  City gateway Railway Station.
-  Improve linkages with surrounding areas.
-  Seek to create more north-south linkages through the blocks
-  Intensification of development, including uses such as residential leisure, offices and cultural facilities ranging from 4 - 7 storeys.
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Key Opportunities for development

 1. Mixed use including office, residential and retail with new iconic building
 2. Mixed use including residential, leisure, office and retail
 3. Mixed use including retail, residential, office and leisure
 4. Mixed use including retail, residential, office and leisure
 5. Mixed use including office, residential, transport interchange and education.
 6. Mixed use including retail, residential, office and leisure
 7. Potential re-development opportunity.
-  High quality public realm improvements.
-  New Boulevard: greening of “ring road” and dedication of public transport routes.



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Options to deliver this vision

Use the past to positively inform the future

The post-war Abercrombie grid and the way in which it evolved has resulted in streets and buildings that vary in quality. The best quality buildings are to be found on Royal Parade and New George Street. As one moves north and west, the buildings change in scale and character, resulting in a poorer quality environment.

There is a need to protect the best of the existing townscape, to examine the potential for possible designation of conservation areas and to retain the building line and original plan for Plymouth, but to encourage new development of the highest quality that is better suited to the needs of today. There is huge development potential and opportunities to increase intensity of development, whilst at the same time improving enclosure along the streets, by extending on top of some of the existing buildings.

Diversify the functions of the City Centre

Currently, the City Centre functions primarily as a retail centre, and has a deserted feel when the shops shut. Only about four hundred people live within the precinct, and office space is limited and outdated. The City Centre lacks modern, robust buildings that can be used for a variety of uses.

In order to make the City Centre more vibrant, there is a need to diversify its current functions and to bring life back into the area outside shopping hours. In order to achieve this we need to encourage a wider mix of uses, including office, retail, leisure and a massive expansion of residential accommodation.

Create a more urban environment

Currently some building heights within the precinct are too low in relation to the width of the street, giving a poor sense of enclosure. Further, the grid structure of the precinct and wide streets mean that in bad weather the precinct is windy and provides little protection from the weather.

A more 'urban' feel to the City Centre could be achieved through an intensification of development. Opportunities could be explored to develop high quality tall buildings in key areas around the City Centre, helping to give it definition. Another option for the

development of tall buildings would be to incorporate them into a new grid of streets within the precinct as proposed in the Mackay Vision. Alternatively, intensification could be achieved through a general increase in the height of the existing buildings within the precinct.

There is a need to enrich the environment of the City Centre through the creation of the highest quality public spaces and buildings. At the same time, there is a need to ensure a safe and comfortable environment day and night, and to maintain and reinforce areas which have a distinctive attractive character. Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of a conservation area.

Improve connections with surrounding areas

The four-lane “ring road” around the City Centre precinct acts as a barrier for pedestrians traveling from neighboring areas. The University of Plymouth and Plymouth College of Art and Design, as well as the cultural buildings on North Hill, are physically very close to the City Centre but are divorced from it due to the ring road and the nature of development along the edges of the ring road. Routes to the railway station are unclear and there is a lack of a clear visual link.

A number of subway/bridge links have already been removed as part of developments already happening. Further pedestrian friendly changes could be implemented in order to create a more civilized environment, thus improving connections with surrounding neighbourhoods. The environment could also be improved by greening the “ring road” – planting along the sides and down the centre of the road as envisaged in the Mackay Vision. This will result in a massive reduction in the capacity of the road network, and so alternative traffic management measures will have to be considered.

Encourage positive pedestrian movement within the City Centre

The perimeter blocks that make up the City Centre precinct are large with few opportunities to cut through to the other streets. This makes for a difficult area for pedestrians to negotiate. Permeability could be improved to ease pedestrian movement by capitalising on opportunities to create more north/south routes through the large blocks. In addition, new development should seek to promote the legibility of the City Centre to help pedestrians find their way around.

Positive relationship with the Cultural Quarter and the University

The development of a Cultural Quarter focusing on the North Hill area, incorporating the University of Plymouth and new creative industries, could provide a new dimension to the City Centre, with potential for the energy of the University and Cultural Quarter activities to influence and animate the city.

The relationships between these areas and the City Centre need to be improved. The barrier of the ring road needs to be broken down by introducing safe surface level crossings, which is beginning to happen with the Drake's Circus proposal.

There is also an opportunity to reconnect the two sides of North Hill – The University Campus and the area where cultural industries could locate. Consideration would need to be given to reducing the width of North Hill at this point and making it easier to cross.

These areas need to be seen as vibrant, active places within the City Centre rather than separate parts of city. The environment of these areas should be of the highest quality. Routes and spaces need to be stimulating, safe, and direct. Historic buildings should be preserved and new buildings should be sustainable in their design, characterised by good quality architecture.

Key matters for consideration

- To identify those parts of the City Centre where there are opportunities to encourage development of tall buildings.
- To facilitate pedestrian movement both within the central precinct, and with surrounding areas.
- To encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport, while not making the area an unattractive destination for private motorists.
- To encourage the provision of a range of residential accommodation in terms of its size, type and tenure.

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- To explore a range of options to bring life back into the central precinct after the shops have closed, perhaps by reintroducing traffic back into the City Centre during the evening.
 - To strengthen the link between the railway station and the City Centre by allowing further development around the station.
 - To draw on the city's position as a waterfront city with a unique heritage to encourage trade and investment.
 - To utilise the potential of the University of Plymouth and Plymouth College of Art and Design to form the nucleus of a Cultural Quarter which will support, and be supported by, the City Centre.
 - To achieve a balance in retail activity between the east and west of the central shopping precinct.
 - To consider selective redevelopment in order to improve north - south pedestrian movements between shopping streets. This also has the potential to increase retail floor space, and to add interest and variety.
 - To improve gateways into the City Centre, by train, car, and bus.
 - To consider the possibility of a conservation area for the City Centre beaux art design.

We would like your views on these matters:

- 1) Is this the right vision for the City Centre?**
- 2) What do you think are the priorities for meeting community needs, leading to the successful transformation of this area into an attractive, vibrant and sustainable mixed use city centre?**
- 3) Are there other options to address these issues?**

We need to know what you think

The statutory consultation period to respond is 7th March - 18th April 2005.

All comments must be received within this period and can be sent to:

Strategic Planning Manager

Planning & Regeneration
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2EW

or

by fax: 01752 304294

by email: ldf@plymouth.gov.uk

Further copies of the leaflet and response forms are available from:

www.plymouth.gov.uk/ldf
The Civic Centre (Planning Section)
Local Libraries

This Document Is also available in **Large Print**, **Braille**, or on **Audio Tape**

