

As a footnote to 'Spatial' considerations, I would ask that the City's heritage be addressed. Central Park is a heritage of past farms, of the countryside - it is needed as such, it is worth preserving. But in the search for a new dynamic city it should be recognised that delusions of grandeur and scale are not the answer when they are unrealistic, or back-breaking, and that in the search for 'identity' it can be counter-productive to swamp or overpower either heritage buildings and institutions or the people. The City of Plymouth needs to enhance all its assets, including the old, but above all it needs to be 'fit for purpose'. Much more 'landmark' building like the life Centre could be critical.

Tests of Soundness applied to the Central Park Area Action Plan.

4, b) National Policy adherence.

4, b) Consistency with National Policy

It is national policy not to sell, hand over or build on greenspace but to protect both open spaces and playing fields and sports facilities. There is increasing emphasis on promoting diverse natural habitats for wildlife and to provide such within areas of municipal land wherever appropriate. It is believed to be important that people have access to fresh air and open space in which to exercise or otherwise enjoy a variety of activities. The CPAAP diminishes these opportunities to expand these areas of enrichment, from 19 Ha down to 16.5 Ha, ie 18.6% greenspace loss.

Centralisation of facilities increases transport needs, when government policy is to try and reduce transport 'miles'. It might be possible, with the Park and Ride facility already available and cooperation/alteration of bus routing possible in the future, to improve access by public transport to the Life Centre. (The S.E. corner, and short southern boundary, are not so fortunate, and the allotments there have no easy access to receive loads.) The CPAAP does nothing actually to promote walking or cycling to any extent above that it is used at present. It will need considerably more effort to improve cycle routes right across the city. A prestigious centre has the draw, if 'lucky', of a tourist attraction and so increases travel.

Centralisation and increased travel costs in money and time does affect the national wish to improve the health of the nation. It requires continuing effort and participation to get fitter and more active. The aim of 30 mins a day, at least 3 times a week is put in jeopardy if people have to pursue this at a 'destination' far from their homes. The very people most at risk from poor health practices will be the least able to benefit from the prestigious (elitist?) set-up. The effect is increased as the CPAAP has the unfortunate add-on of depressing thought of alternative 'locality' initiatives, as well as making any ^{other} indoor swimming pool projects a non-starter. Thinking also appears to diminish about the variety of activities than can be used, eg keep-fit now seems equated with 'use gym', and this, too, diminishes local community enterprise. Plymouth, as opposed to Devonport, seems to only consider, be obsessed, with the grand scheme that is supposed to draw visitors internationally. Locals may find they can afford attendance only as a one-off holiday treat, too, so 'touristy' fun aspects may outweigh the regular, healthy active sport side - leisure and entertainment again. The pleasure and well-being gained from healthy ways of life is a far more beneficial calming counter to today's excesses. Allotments' are also being encouraged nationally.

The CPAAP 'prioritization' is overriding the national directive to include 'affordable' housing in any housing development.

4, b) National Policy adherence

It is also not national policy to allow Councils to sell off or waste assets, to overspend or to overcharge via Council Tax, or even 'at the door' of municipal facilities (ever-diminishing). 'Serve the purpose' and 'inclusion' should be buzz words in the CPAAP, rather than 'vibrant', 'dynamic' spaces or 'landmark' building.

Tests of Soundness applied to the Central Park Area Action Plan

5, Re. community strategy

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At present most people, local to the Park at least, do not see distinctive local communities, but see themselves in a general neighbourhood area (or amalgamation of areas) of some size. The CPAAP 'relationship's' jargon seems alien, and ^{they} see no barriers to this, their Park. But the Park's conservation is unifying and the Council needs to respect the response that was overwhelming after all - these were those 'concerns' mentioned (to be deleted from the Plan as it starts to be implemented, and before a proper "Masterplan" is set out for the Park!). The Council needs to ~~respect this~~ also acknowledge that ^{it is} the open-space opportunities, eg. walking, that keep most local inhabitants (young or old) as fit as they are (there is probably less obesity around here, too). From our point of view it may be useful to encourage local community identity recognition of their own place and worth, and occasional need to take action jointly, rather than a generalised city-wide 'acceptance' of deterioration and old non-participation, 'keep quiet' habit (perhaps a remnant of Plymouth's background as a 'Defence' city).

The people are not opposed to improved sports facilities but to developments of a 'Drake Circus' nature. They are wary of white elephants and little provision seems to have been presented as regards ongoing, maintenance or provision of services at acceptable rates. 'Outsourcing' or commercial take-over seems likely to cost both users and rate-payers. The loss of more local services and amenities is also of concern, and I'm sure that this would extend to the risks to such Town establishments as the Library, Museums, ^{Aquarium} and other Heritage venues, should the new Life Centre start to compete with art, culture and educational events. The City Centre, Hoe and Barbican areas are far more suitable sites. Local people are not, of course, enamoured of large, noisy events at Argyle which radically disturb the evening peace; an exposed, extensive paved 'amphitheatre' will not give a 'Covent Garden' atmosphere either, as it is too far from the multicultural Town.

Residents in these areas are not profligate. The elderly have lived prudently and the younger residents strive to meet rents and mortgages. They do not see the need for 'vibrancy' everywhere, nor expensive luxury facilities that benefit few. However, most people see an indoor swimming pool as extremely beneficial to health, and safety. 'Community' strategy seems to have been abandoned to the strategy of 'centralisation' and 'landmark' building. The developments at Peverell and Pennycomequick are not community projects but finance-raisers. The CPAAP sadly seems exclusive, local initiatives city-wide non-existent - surely this is unsound community strategy.