

## Union Street Conservation Area management plan

*'It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas'* (s.71(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

### General principles

In responding to the issues raised in the Conservation Area appraisal, and in exercising its powers within the Union Street Conservation Area, Plymouth City Council will follow the policies and objectives set out in the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. In particular the management plan conforms to Policies CS02 and CS03, which relate to the delivery of a quality city, and Area Vision 2 - Millbay and Stonehouse - and its associated objectives. It also conforms to the Millbay and Stonehouse Area Action Plan (currently at Submission stage), and the emerging Design Strategy Supplementary Planning Document. Guidance provided in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15*, and English Heritage's *'Guidance on the management of Conservation Areas'* are also used as key reference points for the management plan. In order to interpret these policies and guidance for the Union Street Conservation Area the following principles will be adhered to in the consideration of any changes proposed in the Conservation Area.

**Principle 1** - Proposals to develop or redevelop sites and convert buildings to new uses will be required to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area, and to contribute positively to the wider regeneration of Stonehouse.

**Principle 2** - The position, scale, massing and materials of new development will be expected to respect the existing character of the Conservation Area.

**Principle 3** – Priority will always be given to the retention and enhancement of buildings of heritage value identified in the Conservation Area appraisal and management plans.

**Principle 4** - New development will be expected to be of the highest quality design that respects and enhances the character of the Conservation Area. High quality contemporary architectural design will be encouraged, though high quality restoration through replication will not necessarily be rejected.

**Principle 5** - New transport and parking provision will be expected to respect and where possible enhance the character of the Conservation Area. Prominent insensitive parking provision will therefore not normally be acceptable, and opportunities will be taken wherever possible to reduce or remove any adverse impact of existing parking provision.

**Principle 6** - There should be early Historic Environment input into all proposals for significant public works within the Conservation Area.

**Principle 7** - Historic surfaces and street furniture will be retained, enhanced, and restored wherever practicable.

**Principle 8** – The historic views and vistas identified in the appraisal will be retained, enhanced, and restored.

**Principle 9** - Advertising and signage proposals will be expected to respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of siting, size, number, materials, colours and illumination. (The 1999 Union Street Shopfront Design Guidance provides examples).

## Management proposals

### 1. Statutory and other designations

While statutory protection of important buildings and structures is considered necessary for the overall good management of any Conservation Area, it is not proposed to put any buildings or structures in the Union Street Conservation Area forward for designation at this time.

Non-listed buildings that are considered to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area (see p.11) may however be considered for local listing if they meet criteria which will be laid out in the forthcoming Design Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

**Proposed management plan action** - Possible candidates for any local list will be considered within 12 months of the adoption of the completed appraisal and management plan.

### 2. Enforcement

The most effective means of preserving and enhancing the special interest of Conservation Areas is through efficient use of existing legislation and other powers and Plymouth City Council will use the full range of powers available to it if necessary. This may include the use of Building Preservation Notices, Urgent Works Notices, Repairs Notices, Dangerous Structures Notices, Tree Preservation Orders and Section 215 Notices (used in cases where it is considered that the condition of land or buildings adversely affects the area). Informal contact, discussion and advice will also be used to encourage owners to undertake repairs and maintenance.

One of the main threats to the quality of the Union Street Conservation Area is the gradual erosion of its character by cumulative alterations to listed and unlisted buildings. While Listed Building Consent is required for works of alteration affecting the special character and/or appearance of Listed Buildings, unlisted buildings which are single dwelling houses enjoy the benefit of considerable permitted development rights, which allow, for example, minor extensions, demolitions and replacement doors and windows, without any requirement for planning permission. This means that some buildings have been altered to the detriment of their townscape quality, and important architectural features lost. Articles 4(1) and 4(2) of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 allow Local Planning Authorities to make directions withdrawing all or some of the permitted development rights given under the Order. These have been found to be an effective means of controlling the sort of piecemeal alterations that contribute to the overall degeneration of buildings that contribute to the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

**Proposed management plan action** – An assessment of the likely benefits of Article 4 Directions for the Union Street Conservation Area will be undertaken within twelve months of the adoption of the completed appraisal and management plan. A Direction will be made within the same period if deemed appropriate.

### 3. Buildings at risk (BAR)

Buildings in disrepair or disuse have a particularly negative effect on the quality of Conservation Areas. The compilation of a register of buildings 'at risk' is a useful tool to focus attention on this problem and define the scale of the problem. This indicates the level of resources necessary to bring these buildings back

into good repair and, where appropriate, beneficial use, and helps prioritise action by English Heritage, local authorities, building preservation trusts, funding bodies, and all who can play a part in securing the future of these outstanding and irreplaceable parts of our heritage.

The 1998 Plymouth Buildings at Risk Register was instrumental in providing the justification for a Heritage Lottery Fund 'Townscape Heritage Initiative' scheme, which together with its predecessor, the Union Street Commercial Improvement Area grant scheme, supported the repair and restoration of a number of important historic buildings in the Union Street Conservation Area, including Nos. 39-43,45-49, 59-61, 63, 65 and 150-156 Union Street; 18a Octagon Street, and Nos. 2-6 Sawrey Street.

Notwithstanding these achievements however, 19 buildings or structures within the Conservation Area are recorded on the local 2005 'Buildings at Risk' Register. They include:

- Union Street – No's 34-36, 53, 55, 57, 67, 69, 71, 75, 83, 93-97, 119-122 (The Palace Theatre/Malthouse, Grade II\* listed), 148, 160, 162 (Grand Theatre PH).
- Bath Place - Warehouse

**Proposed management plan action** – A strategy to address Plymouth City Council's target of removing 5% of buildings from the Buildings at Risk Register will be developed within twelve months of the adoption of the completed appraisal and management plan. It is envisaged that this will initially comprise advice and guidance on repairs and restoration in the form of leaflets and publications and through Plymouth City Council's website.

#### 4. Opportunities

The appraisal has identified a number of specific sites and areas within the Conservation Area that currently have either a neutral or negative effect on its overall character. With sensitive development or improved management these sites could contribute positively to the 'preservation or enhancement' of the Conservation Area. These 'opportunity' sites are identified below along with possible delivery mechanisms. These will primarily include the positive management of Council-owned land; partnership working, internally as well as externally; and positive use of the development consents process including the use of Section 106 agreements to deliver opportunities.

- a) **The Palace Theatre is the most prominent and iconic building and site within the Conservation Area. Its condition and future have long been of concern and it is identified on the 2005 'Buildings at Risk' Register as at 'serious risk'.**

**Proposed management plan action:** The submitted Millbay & Stonehouse Area Action Plan Policy MS08 proposes 'a high quality restoration of the Palace Theatre' Proposals will need to be considered particularly against the provisions of Principles 1 and 3 above.

**Delivery:** Through the positive use of the development consents process including the use of Section 106 agreements. Given the importance of this building, it is likely that grant aid will also be available.

- b) **46 Union Street was destroyed by fire in 2003. It is currently a prominent vacant plot that contributes nothing to the Conservation Area and adds to the general air of dereliction. High quality redevelopment would significantly improve this site.**

**Proposed management plan action:** If and when redevelopment opportunities arise for this site, preference should be given to proposals that will reinstate the residential use. Proposals should be considered particularly against the provisions of Principles 1, 2 and 4 above.

**Delivery:** Through the positive use of the development consents process.

- c) **No. 98 Union Street is a prominent vacant site on the corner of Manor Street that contributes nothing to the Conservation Area and adds to the general air of dereliction. High quality redevelopment would significantly improve this site.**

**Proposed management plan action:** Planning permission for a replica building exists for this site, and is being actively encouraged. Work had started on the refurbishment and repair of the adjoining property at the time of this appraisal (February 2007).

**Delivery:** Through the positive use of the development consents process and through enforcement action.

- d) **Nos. 71/73 Union Street and 160/162 Union Street were highlighted as 'critical projects' in the 2000 Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme, as buildings retaining their original architectural features and contributing significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.**

**Proposed management plan action:** Failure to secure a solution through the THI has meant that statutory powers now need to be considered.

**Delivery:** Through use of enforcement powers and through positive use of the development consents process.

- e) **The earlier landscaping scheme between the Phoenix public house and Union Street is looking tired and does not contribute positively to the street scheme.**

**Proposed management plan action:** While this small area could be better managed in the short term, opportunities should be taken for a comprehensive enhancement of the public realm within the Conservation Area to include appropriate landscaping and planting. The submitted Millbay & Stonehouse Area Action Plan Policy MS08 proposes 'continued enhancement of the public realm that respects the character and appearance of the Union Street Conservation Area'. Proposals should be considered particularly against the provisions of Principle 6 above.

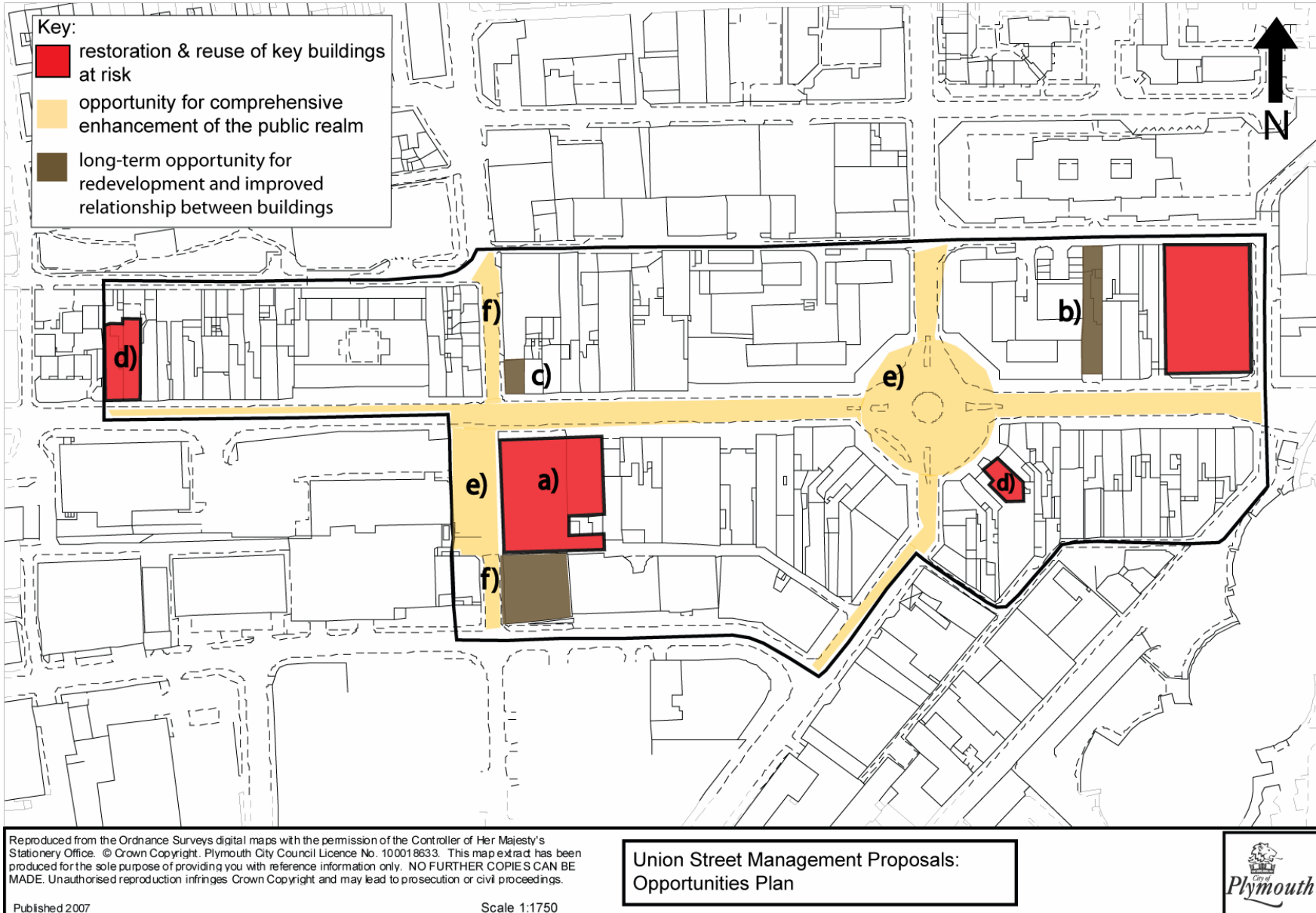
**Delivery:** Through the positive management of Plymouth City Council-owned land, and through the positive use of the development consents process including the use of Section 106 agreements.

- f) **There is scope for the enhancement of pedestrian routes north-south across Union Street.**

**Proposed management plan action:** The submitted Millbay & Stonehouse Area Action Plan Policy MS08 proposes that opportunities should be taken to 'improve connections from the areas north of Union Street to the areas south of the street'.

**Delivery:** Through the positive use of the development consents process including the use of Section 106 agreements.

# Union Street Conservation Area management plan: Opportunities



## 5. Monitoring and review

### Monitoring

An annual Conservation Areas Monitoring Report will be prepared. This will record progress on each of the main action areas and opportunities as identified in the management plan. This will be reported to the Historic Environment Champion, and will form part of Plymouth City Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report. It is envisaged that the first Conservation Areas Monitoring Report will be produced at the end of 2007.

### Review

The Conservation Area appraisal and management plan will be reviewed every 3-5 years. This may result in a revision or expansion of the existing appraisal and management plan and will include:

- recording changes
- re-assessing the definition of special interest that warrants designation
- identifying any new issues affecting the Conservation Area, and revising the management plan accordingly.

Reviews will, wherever possible, link with the review of the Stonehouse Area Action Plan so that development opportunities can be properly considered against the heritage interests of the Union Street Conservation Area.

The input of stakeholders and other local conservation groups in this process, and in the wider management of the historic environment, such as monitoring buildings at risk, will be welcomed. Plymouth City Council's Historic Environment Champion will take an active role in championing the importance of Plymouth's historic environment. Officers will regularly meet the Historic Environment Champion and these meetings will be used to monitor and review the Conservation Area management plan.

## **Appendix 1** **Listed Building**

- The Palace Theatre, Union Street

## **Appendix 2** **Buildings considered as making a positive contribution to the Union Street Conservation Area**

- The Phoenix Public House, Phoenix Street
- Old Octagon Brewery and Docwra Bros. Buildings, Sawrey Street
- Nos 34-36 Union Street (the 'Boulevard')
- R/O 42-44 Union Street (Flora Cottages)
- Nos 55-57 Union Street
- Nos 63-67 Union Street
- Nos 71-73 Union Street
- Nos 89-98 Union Street (inc The Hackney Carriage Public House, Nos 89-91 Union Street)
- Nos 103-109 Union Street
- Nos 140-156 Union Street
- Grand Theatre Public House, No 162 Union Street