

PRELIMINARY APPRAISAL OF THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR CITY CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The SEA/SA takes as its starting point the Vision for Plymouth (set out in the Plymouth City Strategy and Action Plan) which aims to create

One of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.

A clean and green city that makes the most of its environment and location, in particular its water resources and associated ecology.

A city with a strong economy; built on a culture of creativity and innovation and known for its centres of knowledge and learning.

A multi-cultural city where significant social exclusion no longer exists. A city where all the needs of all its citizens are met by high quality, cost effective services and outstanding levels of community involvement.

These broad aims have been translated into a series of 16 **sustainability criteria**, which are described in the SEA/SA Scoping report. The following appraisal examines the potential effects of various actions and draft policies for the nominated area/theme against the framework of the SEA/SA objectives.

Having assessed the likely effect of the different actions, policies and themes in the table below, the information is drawn together in a concluding statement.

The preliminary findings of the SEA/SA and analysis of the public response to both the Issues and Options Leaflet and consultation on the SEA/SA will be used to further refine both the draft plan and the SEA/SA.

COMMENTARY

The proposals for the City Centre Area Action Plan appear broadly sustainable although, inevitably, some conflict of interest may arise and these issues are raised through the following questions:

- Whilst proposals for rationalising pedestrian routes throughout the city centre and to neighbouring communities will have a positive impact on amenity and address some issues associated with safety. Will alterations to the transport infrastructure generate negative effects elsewhere create "rat runs" and increase traffic congestion?
- Achieving sustainable urban communities is a positive approach to future planning. However in recreating and restoring residential areas it is important that the new housing stock and design of individual dwelling units meets the needs of the local community at prices they can afford. The design of buildings also needs to be sensitive to the surrounding built environment and should reflect/retain locally distinctive features.

A number of other questions and issues arise as listed below:

- Will the proposals to introduce sensitive design and increase pedestrian and cyclist usage reduce crime, prostitution and improve safety or should additional/alternative solutions be explored?
- Proposals to ease pedestrian movements may encourage more people to travel on foot or by cycle around the city centre and could have a positive effect on economic growth, but it is questionable as to how far proposals will go in encouraging people to switch to alternative modes of transport.
- In considering plans for the development of a cultural quarter uncertainty arises over the extent to which existing buildings will be reused and restored and what the future will be of existing green space.
- Proposals to intensify development through increasing density/height will need to be designed with care in order to avoid wind funnelling, overshadowing, and visual conflicts with historic buildings and green space.
- Proposals to extend activities outside shopping hours need to be carefully balanced against proposals to increase residential accommodation. Late opening hours and a possible increase in noise and rowdy behaviour may have a negative impact on local communities' quality of life.
- It is important when considering the nature of development proposals to ensure that materials for construction are sourced locally and through sustainable design, energy and waste consumption is reduced.

Table X.1. Analysis of Plan proposals, policies actions and themes against the 16 Sustainability Criteria (listed across the columns).

SA CRITERIA (In Columns across) PLAN POLICIES AND ACTIONS (Below)	1 Nature & Environment	2 Reducing Flood Risk	3 Conserving Biodiversity	4. Built Environment	5. Historic Environment	6. Optimise Land Use	7. Sustainable Resource Use	8. Waste	9. Sustainable Transport	10. Strategic Communications	11. Economic Growth	12. Education & Employment	13. Housing	14. Community Health	15. District Centres	16. Inclusiveness
Diversify the City Centre’s current functions, bring life back into the City Centre outside shopping hours, encourage a wider mix of uses, including office, retail, leisure and a massive expansion of residential accommodation.	✓ ?	0	0	✓ ?	✓ ?	?	?	?	?	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0
Promote an intensification of development through the development of high quality tall buildings in key areas around the City Centre.	?	0	0	✓	?	✓ ?	?	?	0	0		0	?	?	0	0
Promote the intensification of development of tall buildings would be to incorporate them into a new grid of streets within the precinct as proposed in the Mackay Vision.	?	0	0	✓ ?	?	✓ ?	?	?	0	0		0	?	?	0	0
Promote an intensification of use through a general increase in height of the existing buildings within the precinct.	?	0	0	✓ ?	?	✓	?	?	0	0		0	?	?	0	0
Improve connections between the City Centre, University, PCAD and cultural buildings on North Hill divorced by the four-lane “ring road“ and the nature of development along the edges of the road. Improve routes to the railway station and creating a clear visual link.	✓ ?	0	0	✓ ?	0	?	✓ ?	0	✓	✓ ?	?	?	0	✓ ?	0	0
Create pedestrian friendly changes throughout the city centre to improve connections with surrounding neighbourhoods including safe surface crossings.	0	0	0	✓ ?	0	0	✓ ?	0	✓	✓ ?	?	0	0	✓ ?	0	0
Green the “ring road” through planting along the sides and down the centre of the road. This would result in a reduction in the capacity of the road network, and alternative traffic management measures would have to be considered.	✓ ?	0	✓ ?	0	0	?	?	0	✓ ?	0	0	0	0	✓ ?	0	0
Improve pedestrian movement through capitalising on opportunities to create more north/south routes	✓ ?	0	0	?	?	✓ ?	✓ ?	0	✓	✓ ?	?	0	0	✓ ?	0	0

SA CRITERIA (In Columns across)		1. Nature & Environment	2. Reducing Flood Risk	3. Conserving Biodiversity	4. Built Environment	5. Historic Environment	6. Optimise Land Use	7. Sustainable Resource Use	8. Waste	9. Sustainable Transport	10. Strategic Communications	11. Economic Growth	12. Education & Employment	13. Housing	14. Community Health	15. District Centres	16. Inclusiveness
through the large blocks and improving the legibility of the City Centre for pedestrians.																	
Develop a Cultural Quarter focusing on the North Hill area incorporating the University and new creative industries.	?	0	0	✓ ?	✓		?	?	?	0	0	?	0	0	0	0	0
Reconnect two sides of North Hill – The University Campus and area where cultural industries could be relocated – reducing the width of the road/ easing pedestrians crossing	✓ ?	0	0	✓ ?	✓ ?		?	?	0	✓ ?	0	?	?	0	✓ ?	0	0
Create high quality environment with safe direct routes and spaces. Preserve historic buildings, new buildings for their sustainable design and reflect good architecture	✓	0	✓ ?	✓	✓		✓ ?	✓	?	✓	0	?	0	✓ ?	✓	0	0

Symbols employed in Table

- ✓ Supports the sustainability objective
- ✓✓ Strongly supported the sustainability objective
- 0 Has no impact on the sustainability objective
- X Works against the sustainability objective
- XX Works strongly against the sustainability objective
- ? Has an unknown or uncertain effect on the sustainability objective

Legend For Sustainability Criteria

1. Nature and environment: To safeguard and enhance Plymouth's green spaces, coast, tidal areas, waterfront, fresh water and intertidal areas and access to them, recognising the different types of contribution that they make to Plymouth's character.
2. Reduce flood risk: To manage flood risks sustainably, recognising the role of wetlands in reducing flood risks.
3. Biodiversity: To conserve, protect and enhance Plymouth's aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity.

4. Built environment: To enhance the attractiveness and safety of the built environment by raising the quality of urban design in the city.
5. Historic environment: To protect and enhance sites, areas and buildings and landmarks of archaeological, historic, cultural and/or architectural interest.
6. Land resources: To concentrate development within Plymouth's built-up area by optimising the use of previously developed land, infrastructure, under used land and vacant properties.
7. Sustainable resource use: To reduce the consumption of non-renewable sources of energy, water and minerals.
8. Waste: To reduce the amount of waste generated in Plymouth and to minimise the environmental effects of waste disposal.
9. Sustainable transport: To reduce traffic congestion and noise, and improve safety, health and air quality by reducing the need to travel, especially by car.
10. Strategic communication links: To maintain and improve the network of communication and transport infrastructure within Plymouth and the links to the sub-region, the South West, Britain and internationally.
11. Economic growth: To promote sustainable economic growth, particularly of key business sectors, and to utilise employment land and premises effectively and efficiently.
12. Education and employment: To enable all residents to share in Plymouth's growing prosperity by improving access to training, education and job opportunities.
13. Housing: To ensure that all of Plymouth's residents have access to a good quality living environment and a decent home which is affordable and suitable to their needs.
14. Community health, safety and well-being: To safeguard and improve community health, safety and well-being through protection and enhancement of the city's green spaces and sport/leisure facilities, and through appropriate design of the built environment.
15. Local and District Centres: To strengthen the role of local and district centres to reduce the amount that people need to travel.
16. Inclusiveness and participation: To take account of the needs of all sectors of the community in the planning and design of new development.

Note: An additional objective on Retailing is being prepared by Plymouth City Council and will be incorporated in the next stage of the appraisal.