HOW DO WE ENSURE THE CITY’S HERITAGE IS SAFEGUARDED, USED AND CELEBRATED FULLY?

Plymouth Plan topic paper
Historic Environment
Plymouth Plan Topic Paper Historic Environment

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What is this topic paper about?

This topic paper has been published as part of Plymouth Plan Connections. It is one of a series of topic papers that are being published to provide information and support the Council’s ongoing discussions with local people and organisations about the future of the city.

The topic paper looks at the current role of heritage in the city and how it can be used to make Plymouth a more vibrant place and how it can be used to improve the lives of its citizens.

Make your comments on this document as part of the Plymouth Plan Connections before 25 October 2014. [www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan)
Why is this an issue for the Plymouth Plan?

The historic environment is part of our everyday lives. It gives us a sense of place, well-being and cultural identity. The way we value and nurture our historic environment has the potential to bring economic, social and environmental benefits to Plymouth. However in order to plan for the future we must understand our origins and history and what parts of those make Plymouth unique.
Plymouth’s origins and maritime history

Plymouth’s heritage is strongly defined by its maritime location, with its natural harbour and open access to the Atlantic Ocean and English Channel. Archaeological evidence indicates human activity, including settlement, throughout the prehistoric period, including cave sites at Cattedown, Bronze Age burials at Elburton and Iron Age and Roman activity at Mount Batten. Evidence for the Saxon period is sparse but it is clear that the settlements of Sutton and Plympton were developing by the 11th century, both flourished through the medieval period, with Sutton becoming a major port from the late 14th century.

This was reinforced during the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly after the discovery and then colonisation of America. Sir Francis Drake and numerous other explorers and privateers sailed from Plymouth during the late 16th century, and the fleet assembled at Plymouth to face the Spanish Armada in 1588. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers stopped at Plymouth on their way to establish the second English colony in America. By far the more significant issue for Plymothians in the 17th century was the English Civil War when Plymouth held out against strong Royalist forces during four years of almost continuous siege. A Royal Naval dockyard was established at the mouth of the Tamar in the late 17th century, and Devonport Dockyard became the principal driver of Plymouth’s later development. Many of the city’s major sites and buildings, such as the ring of major fortifications built during the 1860s, were built for the use, or defence, of the Dockyard. The modern town also contained a third historic settlement at Stonehouse. This was situated around Stonehouse Creek, and during the, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was home to many of the west country’s top-ranking admirals, doctors and clergy. The Royal William Yard, also located in Stonehouse was built in the 1830s by Sir John Rennie, which is ‘one of the most remarkable and complete early 19th century industrial complexes in the country, and a unique English example of neo-classical planning of a large state manufacturing site.’ Sir John Rennie was also responsible for the Breakwater on Plymouth Sound.
The arrival of the railway in 1856 and the development of Millbay Docks from the 1830s reinforced Plymouth’s position as a maritime city with a major shipbuilding capacity in the Dockyard and a robust transatlantic passenger trade.

In 1914, the three towns of Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport formally merged to become the Borough of Plymouth, and in 1928 the Borough was granted City status by Royal Charter.

As a strategic naval port it was targeted by Germany in the Second World War. Plymouth City Centre was largely destroyed during the Plymouth Blitz, though much of the historic core around Sutton Harbour was spared. Nevertheless rebuilding was being contemplated even before the end of the war with the publication of Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s *Plan for Plymouth* in 1943.

Plymouth has produced or been associated with many famous and distinguished individuals over the centuries, including: Sir Francis Drake, Joshua Reynolds, Captain James Cook, Charles Darwin, Robert Falcon Scott, Sir John Hawkins, John Smeaton, Henry Winstanley, Sir John Rennie, John Foulston, George Wightwick, Isambard Kingdom Brunel Sir Ernest Shackleton and Nancy Astor. The maritime importance of the city is clearly reflected in this list.
The rebuilding of the city after the Second World War has also produced one of the most important town centres of the immediate post-war period. Plymouth boasts more listed 1950s buildings anywhere other than London.

When debating the future direction of the city, it is important to consider the impact that decisions will have on the city’s unique heritage assets and its historic environment and how these can be used to maximum benefit of the future development of the city. It is also useful to discuss how we can better protect and enhance our historic assets.

Plymouth’s historic environment is unique and contributes greatly to the city’s sense of place, economic prosperity and community pride and well-being. There are many different aspects to the historic environment, which ranges from archaeological sites to historic buildings and protected underwater wrecks, to historic parks and gardens. Each is important in its own right and together creates a rich tapestry of the city’s evolution as well as making it an enjoyable place to live, the historic environment should not be seen as self-contained and backward-looking but as an integral part of a regenerated Plymouth.

**Palmerson Forts Map**

Much of Plymouth’s current form is a direct result of the Abercrombie post war plan, which was mostly implemented, for instance, in the city centre and some suburban settlements including Ham, Pennycross, King’s Tamerton, Efford and Ernesettle, which were mostly

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1 Alan Baxter & Associates (2005) Rapid Urban Character Study
2 Plymouth City Council/URS (2011) Palmerston Forts Study
situated on the top of hills. Often the houses have been built in a series of concentric circles or rows, following the natural contours of the land with communal greenspaces and community centres\(^3\).

Plymouth’s Historic Environment
The economic opportunity of Plymouth’s heritage

According to Visit Britain there are three key elements of heritage and culture. These are:

- Cultural Heritage (eg Shakespeare)
- Built or Historical Heritage (eg Tower of London)
- Contemporary Culture (eg modern art, theatre)

Plymouth has examples of all three.

Cultural heritage isn’t just the preservation and celebration of physical assets, it includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artefacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity).

Britain’s culture and heritage is ranked highly at international level. For cultural heritage, Britain is ranked 7th out of 50 nations; for built heritage, Britain is ranked 4th out of 50 nations, and in for contemporary heritage, Britain is ranked 4th out of 50 nations. The USA in particular regard built and cultural heritage highly when choosing to visit the UK (Visit Britain, 2010). This presents a significant opportunity for Plymouth, given its strong historical links to the USA, particularly with the upcoming 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower in 2020.

Visit Britain estimates that Britain’s unique culture and heritage attracts £4.5bn worth of spending by inbound visitors annually, equivalent to more than a quarter of all spending by international visitors, and underpins more than 100,000 jobs across the length and breadth of Britain. However, one of the main reasons people come to Britain is to visit London. In many countries, especially the ones that are less familiar with Britain and its parts, there is a lack of awareness of other places outside London to visit. This presents a challenge for the Plymouth Plan to raise the profile, awareness and accessibility of its unique heritage assets.

How can the Plymouth Plan raise the profile, awareness and accessibility of its unique heritage assets?

The regeneration opportunity of Plymouth’s heritage

The historic environment lies at the heart of our sense of place and can be a valuable catalyst for regeneration. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) ‘Taking Part’ survey (7) has shown that 70 per cent of adults visit a heritage site at least once a year. Community cohesion, in particular, can be achieved when a well-loved heritage feature or built environment is regenerated with the active participation of the community. The common aim and interest introduces new social networks and allows a community to have some ownership of the project; this encourages greater civic pride, social responsibility, and an identifiable community value.

The restoration of historic buildings to accommodate new uses can stimulate new economic sectors, such as arts and cultural industries. In addition, investment in the historic environment will strengthen a town’s character, provide a strong sense of identity, and contribute to a sense of optimism which can further act as a catalyst for regeneration, particularly in coastal areas with a strong heritage identity (8). The regeneration of the Royal William Yard is a key example of this.

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7 Supporting Vibrant and Sustainable Arts and Culture, Department for Culture, Media & Sport and Department for Education 2013
Managing the historic environment

The Council has various statutory duties with regard to the historic environment. These include designating and putting in place proposals for management of conservation areas, determining applications for works to listed buildings or certain demolitions in conservation areas, and maintaining those historic buildings and structures it owns.

The National Planning Policy Framework\(^{(9)}\) (2012) contains provisions for managing the historic environment; specifically it begins by stating ‘Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk’

The NPPF also outlines considerations which local authorities must take into account when dealing with change in the historic environments, which are;

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Each of these can be applied to the Plymouth Plan. The relevant themes are, Local Community, City Pride and Vision and Arts and Culture. The Plymouth Plan should continue to encourage the protection of the historic environment and recognise the important contribution that it makes to the city, in particular, the role it plays in contributing to Plymouth as a vibrant waterfront city.

Many historic buildings are either in private ownership or in a poor state of repair (see the English Heritage national Heritage at Risk Register\(^{(10)}\)). The best way to ensure the long term future of an historic building is to secure a viable and appropriate use for it. There are various national bodies with interests in the historic environment as well as local interest groups. However, there are usually no quick and easy solutions to the questions that can arise in relation to historic buildings, presenting significant challenges with regard to deliverability and viability.

A great deal of responsibility rests on those individuals and businesses who act as custodians of the city’s heritage assets. By reinforcing this message of stewardship and encouraging individuals and the community to ‘buy-in’ to their important role, it is more likely that buildings will be protected and used.

There are examples of success. Plymouth has a wide variety of unique and separate heritage spaces, for instance, the Barbican, the Hoe, Devonport Guildhall, now restored and used by the Real Ideas Organisation, Greenbank Prison (Grade II) converted and shortly to be opened.

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9 Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework
as student flats and Royal William Yard (a £110 million redevelopment, with a further £18 million to be spent renovating the remaining Melville building into a hotel). There are also natural heritage spaces such as Plym Valley Woods. This heritage led regeneration is an example of improving visitor offering for by capitalising on unique historic assets.

“\textit{The heritage of coastal towns, particularly seaside resorts, can be seen as both an asset and a challenge... [English Heritage noted that] the extreme climate and large number of public and listed buildings in seaside resorts can lead to higher maintenance costs. It could equally be argued, however, that high numbers of listed buildings are also an asset for these towns.}” Communities and Local Government Committee, Second Report of the Session 2006-07.

Plymouth has experienced the benefit of heritage-led regeneration in places such as the Royal William Yard, which is now a space for living, work, recreation and art. Continued investment in heritage assets should be encouraged, for instance, exploring the renovation of the numerous forts around the city as a visitor attraction, Crownhill Fort which was restored and owned by the Landmark Trust is a good example of what can be achieved.

The success of some spaces such as the Royal William Yard and the Barbican can be used to create unique ‘heritage destinations’, Visit Britain reports that overall, visiting castles/stately homes is regarded as the best activity the UK has to offer and, on average, potential visitors say that visiting castles or stately homes would be their highest priority if they were to visit Britain\(^\text{11}\). Given that Plymouth has a range of historic fortifications and large houses, such as Saltram owned by the National Trust, opportunities to give these destinations a higher profile and improved accessibility should be explored. The recent Heritage Lottery Fund grant approval for a Plymouth History Centre and renovation of the City Museum and former St Luke’s Church behind this will contribute to making sure Plymouth’s historic environment and history is used and celebrated fully.

These heritage destinations and spaces could also be used to educate people in the importance of the historic environment; they could also be a place for learning as part of school curriculum to better educate young people about the historic environment. The proposed Plymouth History Centre will endeavour to change the way teachers and pupils can use the collections to improve their knowledge and skills. It will develop locally-based curriculum support for schools inspired by the collections, enabling children and young people to understand their place and how Plymouth’s cultural journey shapes the way we live now. In addition to this, further implementation of Wi-Fi hotspots could be used a delivery tool to allow visitors to learn more about the places they are in.

Some compromises to the protection of the historic environment might be sought by developers or agencies, perhaps for reasons of safety or delivery other outcomes. This is particularly the case where there is no statutory protection for a heritage asset (e.g. it is not a listed heritage asset).

building, a scheduled ancient monument or a registered historic park). For example, works to the highway, which can often be completed without the need to seek additional consents when work takes place within a conservation area. Another example of potential conflict with historic environment objectives may be in relation to proposals for solar panels in a conservation setting, as part of the aspiration to achieve a low carbon city. The aim, however, should always be to seek win-win situations, where other objectives are achieved without harm to the historic environment, and to minimise any harm where those objectives genuinely outweigh that of the historic environment.

This will be an important consideration for the Plymouth Plan, which will need to consider where potential conflicts might occur and how they can be best resolved. For instance, we could consider introducing some Article 4 directions to give further control over some of the Conservation Area’s, which would help to tackle issues such as UPVC windows and doors in private dwellings. We could also give serious consideration to the creation of a new Local List to protect good historic buildings that are not Listed.

The existing policy in the Plymouth Core Strategy, CS03, is a good starting point for considering what a revised generic strategic level policy could look like. It states;

‘The Council will safeguard and where possible enhance historic environment interests and the character and setting of areas of acknowledged importance, including scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings (both statutory and locally listed), registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and archaeological remains.’

There is potential to align our policy with the English Heritage direction of referring to ‘Historic Assets’, thereby capturing all designated and undesignated elements of the built historic environment that are important. However, the policy will also need to explain how any competing objectives are weighed in the balance and how win-win situations can be achieved.

Lastly, consideration should be given towards possible future historic environments, for example, housing in areas such as Peverell and Hartley, which are becoming more valued in their appearance (people commented on their architectural merit during the SNDPD consultation, www.plymouth.gov.uk /sustainableneighbourhoodsipo), and the increasingly valued Abercrombie vision of the city centre, the Plymouth Plan will need policies to ensure that development and change responds positively to that vision. The Plymouth Plan will need to explore opportunities to recognise future historic environments through increased protection, including the city centre.

How do we go about finding ways to manage and optimise the value of the historic environment?
## Solutions – What are the opportunities for addressing?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Related Theme</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assert that the responsibility for stewardship of historic buildings rests with the owner but promote community involvement in the protection and enhancement of historic buildings and spaces.</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" />  <img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Take A Part</td>
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<td>Capture living heritage, living memory stories and through enabling community led projects</td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Identify and allocate key 'heritage destinations' to raise awareness and focus decision making, for both domestic visitors and international visitors</td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Visit Britain, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in Plymouth’s unique heritage and natural assets. Ensure they are used, valued – Royal William Yard, the Hoe, Barbican, Palace Theatre, City Centre, Sutton Harbour, Union Street, Mount Batten, Saltram House and park</td>
<td><img src="image10.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image11.png" alt="Image" /> <img src="image12.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) ‘Taking Part’ survey</td>
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<td>Promote service level agreements and Management Plans for Council services and partners working with, or around historic assets or environments to further protect and enhance them.</td>
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<td>Improve wayfinding and publicity of historic assets.</td>
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<td>The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) ‘Taking Part’ survey</td>
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<td>Maintain status quo with similarly worded Policy to CS03 (Safeguard and Enhance the Historic Environment) however, review to take account of heritage assets and the balancing of competing objectives</td>
<td>Plymouth City Council Core Strategy</td>
<td>Plymouth History Centre bid, Arts and Culture Cabinet Report, June 2013</td>
</tr>
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<td>Utilise or embed heritage opportunities, destinations and spaces for learning in school curriculums, in particular the future Plymouth History Centre. Also increase use of wifi hotspots for visitor use as a means of delivering learning about heritage.</td>
<td>Plymouth History Centre bid, Arts and Culture Cabinet Report, June 2013</td>
<td>Plymouth History Centre bid, Arts and Culture Cabinet Report, June 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create policies for key historic assets and recognise the need for protection of possible future historic assets (building or area). We should consider introducing some Article 4 directions to some of the CA’s, and also give serious consideration to the creation of a new Local List.</td>
<td>Sustainable Neighbourhood Development Plan Document Consultation</td>
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What happens next?

Any comments received on this topic paper will be considered in the preparation of the Plymouth Plan. You can make comments at [www.plymouth.gov.uk/PlymouthPlan](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/PlymouthPlan) or by email [plymouthplan@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:plymouthplan@plymouth.gov.uk). Alternatively, please post your comments to:

Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Department  
Plymouth City Council  
Ballard House  
West Hoe Road  
Plymouth  
PL1 3BJ

The closing date for consultation responses is 25 October 2014.
List of key Plymouth Plan evidence based documents

- Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (2014) The role of culture and leisure in improving health and wellbeing
- Culture South West (2009) Cultural Place Profile: Plymouth and surrounding area
- Department for Culture Media and Sport (2013) Supporting Vibrant and Sustainable Arts and Culture
- Plymouth City Council (2005) Rapid Urban Character Study
- Plymouth City Council/LDA Design (2005) Millbay and Stonehouse Character Study
- Plymouth City Council (2006) Devonport Characterisation study & Management Proposals
- Plymouth City Council (2008) Plymouth City Centre Precinct: Assessment of strategic options for the management of its heritage assets
- Plymouth City Council (2009) Design Supplementary Planning Document
- Plymouth City Council/URS (2011) Palmerston Forts Study
- Plymouth City Council (2012) Plymouth City of Culture BID 2017
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