HOW DO WE CREATE NEIGHBOURHOODS WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE?

Plymouth Plan topic paper
Local Community
Local Community Topic Paper

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Local Community

Make your comments on this paper and other information as part of Plymouth Plan Connections before 25 October 2014. www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan
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 how the Plymouth Plan can create and support neighbourhoods in the city to be places where people want to live and places that encourage people to live healthy and happy lives. It sets out areas that would benefit from more detailed spatial planning over the next twenty years and what kind of investment may be required.
Plymouth’s neighbourhoods

Plymouth’s vision is to be one of the most vibrant waterfront cities in Europe, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone. Quality of life is therefore central to the city’s growth agenda which will result in Plymouth’s population increasing to over 300,000 by 2031. This provides a significant challenge to the Plymouth Plan; namely how do we ensure that the city’s existing neighbourhoods remain places where people want to live and how do we ensure that new development contributes positively to existing neighbourhoods?

Plymouth is a city made up of neighbourhoods. As the City Centre reconstruction commenced following the publication of Abercrombie’s ‘A Plan for Plymouth’(1) after the Second World War, the city also began a major construction scheme to build ‘neighbourhood units’. The plan proposed 13 neighbourhood units, the new areas of Efford, Emesettle, Ham, Honicknowle, Pennycross, Southway and Whitleigh built upon green fields and were all named after local farms. Other areas such as Crownhill, King’s Tamerton, and Tamerton Foliot were incorporated into new neighbourhood centres all based on good social principles where each ‘neighbourhood unit’ would have access to the full range of facilities and services provided within 10 to 15 minutes walking distance from any part of it, each with suitable school provision and surrounded by a ‘Green Belt’. At the heart of the unit would be the neighbourhood centre where each population group of 10,000 would have a ‘Church or Chapel; Small Library; Swimming Bath; Cinema; Restaurant, Cafe or Hotel; Shops; Laundry; Child Welfare and other clinics’ as well as a ‘Community Building’, all characteristics which were highlighted during the 2013 Plymouth Plan conversation.

Plymouth today is made up of approximately 40 different neighbourhoods, depending how a neighbourhood is defined. However, while some are vibrant places to live with lively neighbourhood centres, others are dominated by housing and suffer from a lack of local facilities whilst experiencing high levels of deprivation. The index of multiple deprivation supports this and highlights the number of communities facing disadvantage, with 41 lower super output areas (LSOA’s) in the top 20 per cent nationally in terms of deprivation.(2)(3)

A neighbourhood focus of the Plymouth Plan will be an important aspect of addressing inequalities within Plymouth. This is an essential component of a successful growth agenda.

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3 A LSOA (lower super output area) is a geographical area used to improve the reporting of small area statistics. There is a LSOA for each postcode in England and Wales. For further information visit the Office for National Statistics website: www.ons.gov.uk
The social role of planning

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)\(^4\) places sustainable development at the heart of the national planning system, and a key element of this is its social role. In this respect the NPPF sets out that the planning system will “support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being”.

The Plymouth Plan, when adopted, will replace the Plymouth Core Strategy (2007)\(^5\). The Core Strategy clearly understood that the social role of planning was crucial to the successful delivery of the City vision for growth, because it is at the neighbourhood level that people have the potential to thrive. The Core Strategy therefore gave a strategic place to Policy CS01, which established the concept of building a city of sustainable linked communities, a golden thread running through the entire plan.

**Policy CS01 - Development of Sustainable Linked Communities**

The Council will improve the sustainability of the individual communities and neighbourhoods in the city through allocating sites for development and considering proposals for development in terms of the extent to which they:

1. Contribute to meeting the needs of the neighbourhood, helping to support a sustainable linked community.

2. Deliver development of an appropriate type, form, scale, mix and density in relation to its location relative to the neighbourhood’s centre.

3. Safeguard and capitalise on the local environment, including the need to deliver effective and sustainable use of resources.

4. Contribute to promoting a positive sense of place and identity.

5. Contribute to creating a well-connected, accessible, inclusive and safe community.

The Plymouth Plan provides an opportunity to review the concept of a city of sustainable linked communities and to consider afresh whether the elements of what makes a healthy and vibrant neighbourhood are adequately supported.

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What makes a place a healthy community?

The health of a community is determined by many things, including those which are affected by the place that you live. For example, a person’s lifestyle can be affected by the nature of services and facilities available in a neighbourhood; and the physical, social and economic environment can affect a person’s sense of well-being, see diagram below.

What makes a healthy community

Source: Barton and Grant, 2006. (6)

The Plymouth Fairness Commission (7) was set up to highlight issues of unfairness about living and working in Plymouth. Its report emphasises the different social and economic opportunities people have in Plymouth based on which area of the city they live or are born into so called a ‘Tale of Two Cities’. For example, the Fairness Commission found that if you are born in one of Plymouth’s most deprived neighbourhoods there’s a less than 35 per cent

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chance you’ll get five or more GCSE’s and your life expectancy is 72.2 years. If however you are born into one of Plymouth’s least deprived neighbourhoods there’s at least a 70 per cent chance of getting five or more GCSE’s and your life expectancy is nearly 85 years.

The findings of both the Plymouth Fairness Commission and the Plymouth Plan Area Assessments (PPAAs) (8) show that the lack of local facilities has strong correlations with deprivation, low education, poor health, unemployment and crime. For example, the South West of the city shows high levels of deprivation which correlates with a lack of facilities which are within a 10 minute walk away and high levels of reported crime. The quality of life data indicates a correlation between a lower quality of life and the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The Plymouth Plan will need to address inequality which exists within the city.

The Successful Communities Delivery Plan: 2012-2017 is the Council’s current response document in targeting the most deprived neighbourhoods. The plan highlights a commitment to reducing inequalities between neighbourhoods in the city and creating safe, stable, sustainable communities where residents want to live and work.

What do you feel are the key things that make a local neighbourhood a healthy place to live?

A key issue for the Plymouth Plan is to ensure that all aspects of public policy help to reinforce the health and sustainability of Plymouth’s neighbourhoods. This means that it is a cities responsibility to work closer and better together to support communities within neighbourhoods. It also means that development that takes place should make a positive contribution to this goal, and that those assets which are crucial to healthy and sustainable communities, such as local centres for shops and services and local open space, are safeguarded. The provision of services such as schools, sports and leisure, open space management and health should have regard to how they can be delivered in a way that supports healthy communities, with a particular need to consider the financial sustainability of such services.

The creation of hubs at the heart of local communities which are inclusive and open for all members of the local community regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, marital status and health issues is one way of supporting this outcome, delivering economies of scale as well as providing a focal point where local people can meet.

Community hubs come in all shapes and sizes, what does a community hub mean to you and what other initiatives would support healthy and sustainable communities?

8 The Plymouth Plan Area Assessments have split the city into eight different areas: Central; North; North West; Plympton; Plymstock; South; South West and West. They cover a wide range of issues including education, proximity to local services and school provision and are available for comment on our website or at your local library until 25 October 2014: www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan
There is over a 10 years difference in life expectancy in Plymouth, depending on which neighbourhood you are born in.
Community-led regeneration

There is much that a local community can do help themselves and a range of things that organisations can do to bring people together and bring about change in an area, and the Localism Act\(^9\) provides local people will a range of tools and freedoms to improve and manage change in their local neighbourhoods, including:

- Local people can apply to set up a neighbourhood forum, which is given new planning powers to create planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood through a ‘neighbourhood plan.’

- Communities can use neighbourhood planning to permit the development they want to see – without the need for planning applications. These are called ‘neighbourhood development orders.’

- The Localism Act allows communities to bring forward a ‘community right to build order’ which allows certain community groups to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site, without the need for planning permission. This gives communities the freedom to develop housing and other facilities. Any benefit stays within the community to be used for the community’s benefit.

- The Community Infrastructure Levy allows the council to set charges which developers must pay when bringing forward new development in order to contribute to the infrastructure needs of the area. The Localism Act provides that a meaningful proportion of these funds to be spent in areas where the development has taken place.

- Local Communities can use the Community Right to Bid to ‘pause’ the sale of buildings or land. It gives a community time to develop a bid to buy it.

The eight Plymouth Plan Area Assessments have been published to provide basic information about different parts of Plymouth and the neighbourhoods within these areas. These assessments will be updated following the end of Plymouth Plan Connections. They will be a helpful tool for any local community that wishes to prepare a neighbourhood plan in order to shape how the area might change.

\(^9\) DCLG (2011) Localism Act visit
One requirement of a neighbourhood plan is that it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, in Plymouth’s case, the current Adopted Core Strategy. A key role for the Plymouth Plan will therefore be to establish an overarching framework for growth and change in different parts of the city which will then create a context within which neighbourhood plans can be prepared. A key mechanism for this will be a series of Area Visions which help set an overall direction of travel. The Council will be undertaking extensive community consultation during Plymouth Plan Connections in order to help create these Area Visions.

There are some parts of the city where we think neighbourhood plans could be of particular help, however the legislation allows for any community to seek to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Some parts of the city are particularly complex in nature, with multiple functions, issues, uses and opportunities; other parts of the city will have very specific needs, for example in relation to community infrastructure and the need for regeneration. Neighbourhood plans can help to provide a coherent local strategy for such areas in a way that a more strategic document such as the Plymouth Plan cannot, whilst empowering local people to determine how and where growth takes place. The map below shows where people have already expressed an interest in developing a neighbourhood plan in Plymouth.

Do you feel there are other areas where neighbourhood plans may be of benefit to a local community/local area?
Areas where people have expressed an interest in developing a neighbourhood plan (Source: Plymouth City Council)
Case Study: Barne Barton Neighbourhood Plan

Barne Barton is one of Plymouth’s priority neighbourhoods with a long history of social and economic problems. Officers from the Council together with the Tamar View Community Association have been supporting the development of the first pilot neighbourhood plan in Barne Barton. This started with events to enable residents and service providers to come together in the same place to discuss the neighbourhood, resident issues, desires and needs, and listen to each other. Over 150 individuals and families were involved in this process. A resident-led neighbourhood forum has been set up, which held neighbourhood plan workshops with residents and others to work up priority themes and activities which included open space and derelict and underused land, housing, employment and skills, community facilities, community connectivity and social networks.

The process included young people as well as adults and families, photo walkabouts, workshops, community events, art projects and fun activities, in order to engage all sectors of the community. There is now a thriving partnership between service providers in Barne Barton, all keen to support the residents to lead the neighbourhood plan, and determine the future of the neighbourhood.

Barne Barton is an example of a pro-active co-operative council and a local community working together.

Neighbourhood planning is not the only tool the public can use to bring about change in their local area. There are many others, some of which are referenced in other topic papers.

By working together, local communities and supporting bodies can ensure the best use of community facilities. There are numerous examples of this already: St. Aubyn’s Church in Devonport is also the local library; Central Library sometimes offers medical and advice services in the form of Dementia Friends Information Sessions and Autism Spectrum Drop-in sessions; Southway Library occasionally offers a free blood pressure check and advice and Plymstock Library occasionally offers a drop-in session for the Alzheimer’s Society. While these are examples on how local facilities are already benefitting local communities, the Plymouth Plan offers an opportunity to explore the expansion of this concept.
Case Study: St. Aubyn’s Church

St Aubyn’s Church in Devonport is a good example of how one community facility can have a multi-use and support all sectors of a local community. Not only is the building a place of worship, but it is also home to the Devonport library service, as well as providing an Active Steps service (Free chair based movement class for over 50s) and a Work Club.

Do you believe that established community buildings such as schools and places of worship would work well with a mixture of different uses?
# Plymouth Plan Solutions

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<th>Plymouth Plan Solutions</th>
<th>Related Theme</th>
<th>Why?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work with communities and ensure the ‘social role’ is highlighted and embedded within the principles of the Plymouth Plan to develop strong, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods where people want to live - by identifying people’s needs and wants based on statistics and by asking and listening to them</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Local Community" /> <img src="image2.png" alt="Health and Wellbeing" /></td>
<td>Strong and healthy people have more time/opportunities to contribute to their local community.</td>
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| Incorporate ‘area visions’ to help shape change within the city, which have been prepared with and in response to the needs of local communities. It will provide the framework and evidence needed to support local people in shaping their own neighbourhoods, including through neighbourhood plans and the community infrastructure levy | ![Local Community](image1.png) ![Living and Housing](image3.png) | As a plan for people as well as place it is important that the Plymouth Plan sets an appropriate framework to enable the suite of neighbourhood planning tools to be used effectively, making sure that development and change works to meet the needs of the people.

As part of the Plymouth Plan conversation which took place in 2013, it was suggested that a quality community centre for each area of Plymouth would be created and more youth centre or spaces for young people to ‘hang out’ (particularly in the evenings), area visions, previously mentioned, are a way as to which this can be incorporated within the Plymouth Plan. |
**Plymouth Plan Solutions** | **Related Theme** | **Why?**
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In respect of neighbourhood planning, minimum standards and ‘good practice’ will be introduced to ensure effective consultation for the Council and developers through a review of the Statement of Community Involvement. For example where possible, local venues within walking distance of those affected should be chosen to host consultation events and there should be set methods of publicity, feeding back etc. | Minimum standards, ‘good practice’ and a review of the Statement of Community Involvement will not only aid effective consultation but will also allow those who want to have a say on new developments in their local areas have a say. |
Develop policies which protect current assets of community value and ensure these spaces and places are available and usable for everyone, especially those who are currently marginalised and not represented by the current, active community | Assets of Community Value are key to creating local/functional communities where people want to live, ensuring they are usable and accessible to everyone will reduce exclusion and promote inclusion |
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<td>Support investment in local facilities and ensure they are provided for all communities. It will promote inclusion so that all members of a community regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, marital status and health issues have access to local support. Where new facilities cannot be financially supported or created, alternative uses for other, established buildings at the heart of communities such as schools, places of worship and libraries etc. should be considered and made available for public use.</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Local Community" /> <img src="image2.png" alt="Getting Around" /> <img src="image3.png" alt="City Pride and Vision" /></td>
<td>Findings from the Fairness Commission found that some schools in Plymouth do not explore innovative approaches to ensure young people are not isolated from other sectors of society. There is evidence that a building such as a school or a library can become multi-functional and support local communities in a number of ways. This is also one of the suggestions which came from the Plymouth Plan conversation in 2013.</td>
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<td>Promote equal access to leisure and community facilities regardless of where people live, to enable support and advice for self-help, improve health and well-being, enable social networks and community connectivity to foster.</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Local Community" /> <img src="image2.png" alt="Getting Around" /> <img src="image4.png" alt="Health and Wellbeing" /> <img src="image3.png" alt="City Pride and Vision" /></td>
<td>Sustainable and active communities who are healthy and who have a sense of pride of place.</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 or by email 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.

- PCC (2014) Engagement Framework
- PCC (2014) Plymouth Plan Area Assessments
- PCC (2014) Topic Papers