HOW DO WE INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF HEALTHY AND LOCAL FOOD IN PLYMOUTH?

Plymouth Plan topic paper
Local Food
## Plymouth Plan Topic Paper Local Food

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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 ongoing discussions with local people and organisations about the future of the city. This paper considers how the Plymouth Plan can increase access to healthy and local food for Plymouth’s growing population, and support a sustainable food economy.

This paper used information from 'The Future of Food in Plymouth 2014-2031', a report to Plymouth City Council prepared by the Food Plymouth Partnership.

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)
Background

The city of Plymouth is located adjacent to the rich agricultural hinterland of the Tamar Valley, and on the south coast with abundant supplies of fish and shellfish. Plymouth is a city of 267,000, and as with other major cities, wide disparities in socio-economic profile exist. However despite its advantaged location, very little food for the city population is currently sourced from its hinterland, or its port, which sees some of the biggest fish-landings in the UK.

This reflects national trends where, over the past decades, there has been steady erosion in our food culture. However, the food sector (farming, market gardening, fishing, wholesale and supply, restaurants and catering, retailing) remains one of the biggest employment sectors in the South West. It is also one of the greatest single contributors to long term public health outcomes; to waste and carbon emissions; and to biodiversity.

This is of importance to Plymouth where the health of people is generally worse than the England average. Levels of obesity and other food-related diseases are continuing to rise. There is 12 years difference in life expectancy across the city, and an increasing number of Plymouth residents who seek help from food banks.

The Plymouth Plan provides an opportunity to support a vibrant and diverse food economy with improved supply of and access to healthy and sustainable locally produced food.
What are the key drivers of the need for change?

In Plymouth there is a strong underlying link between health deprivation and socio-economic status. Some areas of the city are considered ‘food deserts’ – where access to food of any kind, but in particular fresh and affordable food, is highly restricted. Studies have shown that this is a particular issue for the west / south west of Plymouth.\(^1\) The health of people in Plymouth is generally worse than the England average and with lower levels of ‘healthy eating’. There is a strong correlation between socio-economic status, affluence, location within the city and access to fresh food, which goes some way to explaining the correlation with health outcomes.

Improved health and wellbeing is a major aspiration for the future development of Plymouth. The Public Health Outcomes Framework under section 31 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 states the objectives that local authorities must have in regard to their public health functions:

- increased healthy life expectancy
- reduced differences in life expectancy
- healthy life expectancy between communities.

With around 12 years difference in life expectancy between certain geographical areas in Plymouth tackling health inequalities is a priority\(^2\).

The Plymouth Health and Well Being Strategy (2014), developed by Plymouth’s new Health and Wellbeing Board, draws on indicators in both the Public Health Outcomes Framework and the NHS Outcomes Framework in which Plymouth performs poorly. This identifies areas such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, breastfeeding and healthy weight as priorities for Plymouth’s work on health. Diet and access to healthy food is recognised as having a significant role to play in combatting these issues.

Local evidence has shown that fast food outlets are within easy walking distance (800m) of all secondary schools in Plymouth\(^3\) and Plymouth University, exposing children and young people to unhealthy food environments and contributing to the problems expressed above. The exposure is greater in more deprived neighbourhoods and for schools close to local shopping centres\(^4\).

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1 Plymouth Local Shopping Needs Study November 2004; Plymouth District and Local Centres Study Nov 2010; Plymouth Retail and Centres Study May 2012
A comparison of benefits from participation in Food for Life (FFL) programmes found that in Nottingham, £3.11 benefit for the local economy was generated for every £1 spent locally on ingredients for school meals, and in Plymouth, £3.04 for every £1 spent. Hence, there are substantial economic and social benefits to be gained from public procurement practices which focus on a sustainable agenda around seasonal and local produce.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) principle 9 recognises the role of community food growing:

> “promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production).”

The NPPF also recognises food production as one of the benefits of providing natural environments. The significance of food growing to healthy communities is further reinforced in the guidance to the NPPF where a healthy community is defined as a place where active healthy lifestyles are made easy through “the pattern of development, good urban design, good access to local services and facilities” and where there is “green open space and safe places for active play and food growing”.

Plymouth’s Green Infrastructure Plan identifies 14 priority projects required to support the city’s growth aspirations and details the environmental, social and economic benefits of green space. Local food, active lifestyles and biodiversity are three of the five themes, with the vision that:

> ‘Local food production will be increased to supply an enhanced demand from Plymouth and the surrounding areas. This demand will be led by the large public sector organisations but opportunities to increase consumer demand will be investigated’.

Do you think that there are other important reasons for addressing food in the Plymouth Plan?

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5 New Economics Foundation (NEF), 2011, The benefits of procuring school meals through the Food for Life Partnership
What are the opportunities for addressing these needs?

The Plymouth Plan provides an opportunity to develop strategic responses to the issues highlighted in this paper. Options for consideration are:

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| 1. Integrate food planning into the Local Plan policies and proposals | Making use of development planning tools, there are opportunities to:  
  - Adopt a strategic policy of support for food growing that includes protecting existing community food growing spaces  
  - Address the shortfall in provision of community food growing spaces in neighbourhoods  
  - Encourage the temporary use of vacant sites and land awaiting development for growing  
  - Require provision for new food growing spaces as part of all new major residential developments  
  - Consider restricting the proliferation of fast food outlets (through change of use applications) in locations where that would help the adoption of healthy lifestyles i.e. near schools  
  - Safeguard existing spaces used for processing and selling of local food produce  
  - Integrate opportunities for retail of local produce into design of new buildings and spaces. |
| 2. Integrate food learning into local planning and delivery of educational services | There are opportunities for integrating food priorities within corporate and service plans of Plymouth City Council and partners, to:  
  - provide quality school meals, sourcing local produce  
  - promote food education (in schools, community kitchens etc) |
| 3. Economic development-led strategy | There are opportunities for local food to support growth in the Plymouth economy. For these to be realised the Plymouth Plan needs to support:  
  - Provision of suitable business premises  
  - the realisation of viable local food distribution networks  
  - local procurement of food particularly within the public sector  
  - training and skills provision for the food sector |

Can you suggest additional or alternative opportunities?
What do we think is the preferred strategy?

The Council is committed to ensuring that the Plymouth Plan appropriately reflects the wide ranging impact food has on communities and to put together a strategy that integrates opportunities for food to support Plymouth’s sustainable growth. Food is strategic in nature in that it requires multiple interventions to address the underlying issues of food poverty, food security (ensuring availability and affordability), environmental impact and health.

The Council will work with Food Plymouth to develop policies for inclusion in the Plymouth Plan. These policies will focus on enabling Plymouth’s move towards sustainable and resilient food economy, on collaboration between communities and producers, processors, suppliers in and around the city that supports the health and wellbeing of communities and the city’s natural infrastructure.

To do this the Plymouth Plan will:

**Proactive Spatial Planning**

- review our current greenspace policies in the Plymouth Core Strategy to ensure that we adequately protect existing community growing spaces
- explore options for allocating land for new community growing, including as a temporary or ‘meanwhile’ use
- seek to use planning powers to restrict the growth in fast food outlets close to schools
- consider how policy guidance can support uptake of design features in new development that will contribute to on-site food production
- Explore how policies can continue to promote hubs such as the City Market and their role in local food retailing

**Economic Development**

The Plymouth Plan will consider policies that support the role that high quality local food can play in achieving business growth, particularly in relation to the Mayflower 2020 anniversary and growth of the city’s visitor economy and cultural offer. This could include:

- encouraging a greater number and diversity of food enterprises and jobs, making the most of Plymouth’s rich land and sea resources
- support for local food orientated SMEs, and the development of the skills, and supply chain infrastructure for local food production and retailing
- targeting procurement of food for public services, to source healthy and sustainable food from local producers and suppliers and so keeping value within the local economy
- integrate provision of space for independent / local food retailing into regeneration schemes
- promote Plymouth as a destination for high quality restaurants and catering
- promoting and celebrating the food and culinary traditions of all cultures through a variety of public events, such as Plymouth’s Flavourfest
Local Education

The Plymouth Plan will consider how to give everyone the opportunity to learn about good food through city-wide initiatives such as the ‘Food for Life’ school programme. Plymouth already leads the field nationally in this area and a target of all Plymouth schools is to achieve bronze award, with half at silver and ten gold flagship schools is considered deliverable by 2030.

Health and Well Being

Health is of concern to many organisations. A long term cross-cutting multi agency strategy could be developed around food and diet as part of a campaign to tackle the city’s problems around healthy weight. Plymouth Plan policies could provide for a wide range of community growing and other food-related activities to improve physical and mental health for people of all ages.

Do you agree with these priorities, and can you suggest additional or alternative approaches?
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.

List of key Plymouth Plan evidence base

  www.foodplymouth.org/140605-Food-Plymouth-Future-of-Food-FINAL.pdf

