



The Planning Inspectorate

Report to Plymouth City Council

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an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

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PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (AS AMENDED)

SECTION 20

**REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION INTO THE
DERRIFORD AND SEATON AREA ACTION PLAN 2006-2021**

Document submitted for examination on 21 December 2012

Examination hearings held between 21st and 28th March 2013

File Ref: PINS/ N1160/429/10

Key abbreviations Used in this Report

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CS	Core Strategy
LDS	Local Development Scheme
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
The Framework	National Planning Policy Framework
The Plan	Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan

Non-Technical Summary

This report should be read in its totality. It concludes, with regard to the cumulative consideration of all factors, that the Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan does not provide an appropriate basis for the planning of the Area over the submitted Plan period and is consequently not sound.

In summary:

On the basis of the evidence available and with due regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Plan is neither justified adequately nor effective. In particular:

- The Plan fails to have adequate regard to the close proximity of the currently disused airport and the effects that the potential use of this significant site could have upon the form and location of development within Derriford and Seaton;
- The Plan is not supported by up to date and adequate economic evidence which justifies the location of the District Centre upon the Plymouth International Medical Technology Park;
- The Plan is not supported by adequate evidence that demonstrates the timely deliverability of key sites across the Plan period;
- The Plan is not supported by evidence to indicate that the timely modal shift necessary to ensure transport infrastructure will be able to accommodate the development proposed within the area can be secured;
- The Plan is not supported by evidence that the transport infrastructure shown within the Plan is deliverable in a timely fashion.

Introduction

1. This report contains my assessment of the Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan 2006-2021 (the Plan) in terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It considers first whether the Plan's preparation has complied with the duty to co-operate, in recognition that there is no scope to remedy any failure in this regard. It then considers whether the Plan is sound and whether it is compliant with the legal requirements. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 182) makes clear that to be sound, a Local Plan should be positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy.
2. The starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The basis for my examination is the submitted Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan. I have considered the available evidence which, when considered in totality, leaves me unable to reach a reasonable conclusion that the submitted Plan is sound.
3. With due regard to Section 20(7C) of the 2004 Act and following correspondence, the Council requested that, as necessary, I identify any preliminary concerns with the Plan. Following a further exchange of correspondence which identified issues of unsoundness that I considered were not capable of ready rectification, the Council requested a final report and acknowledged that such a report would recommend non adoption of the Plan¹.
4. This report highlights a number of deficiencies to the Council in relation to soundness. My report recommends non-adoption of the Plan as submitted.

Assessment of Duty to Co-operate

5. Section s20(5)(c) of the 2004 Act requires that I consider whether the Council complied with any duty imposed on it by section 33A of the 2004 Act in relation to the Plan's preparation.
6. The Plan covers only part of the City Council administrative area and has no contiguous boundaries with other local authority areas. Core document ED/02 is a useful source of information as to how the Council considers that it has discharged the Duty to Cooperate in relation to the content of the Plan. It is clear from this paper and other evidence sources that constructive discussions have been undertaken with key bodies, such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the Highways Agency, neighbouring authorities and others. Whilst such constructive dialogue with all prescribed bodies will need to be maintained into the future, there is no substantive evidence to indicate that the mechanisms of engagement or the establishment of suitable partnerships is inadequate. Subject to discussion below as necessary on the effectiveness of such engagement, the Duty to Cooperate has been met.

¹ Council letter 8.5.13

Assessment of Soundness

Preamble

7. A series of public hearing sessions was programmed in March 2013. Each session was led by an agenda that followed the previous identification of a number of 'Matters and Issues' which I wished to examine further. Each agenda enabled opportunity for submissions to be made as appropriate and also included 'Other Matters' which represented an opportunity to raise additional relevant matters for discussion at each session. Through this methodology a fair and transparent opportunity was provided for all interested parties to raise matters of relevance and concern.
8. After the close of the final Hearing session, the Council discovered two previously unreported submissions from members of the public as to the content of the Plan. I have taken these into account in reaching my conclusions. Both respondents confirmed that they did not wish to appear before me to pursue further their concerns and were content to rely upon written submissions.
9. The Plan was prepared whilst the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West remained extant. The revocation of the RSS was completed after the close of the final Hearing session and after the Council received its requested preliminary concerns. I have taken into account the revocation. In light of my conclusion as to soundness, a public opportunity to comment upon the RSS revocation is not necessary in the context of the Plan and the local area and would not be a proportionate use of resources.

Main Issues

10. Taking account of all the representations, written evidence and the discussions that took place at the examination hearings I have identified six main Matters upon which the soundness of the Plan depends which broadly reflect the structure of the Plan. These are addressed in numerical order.

Matter 1 – Vision and Legal Compliance

Does the AAP have a robust vision for Derriford and Seaton and has it been positively prepared in compliance with all relevant legal requirements? Is the AAP consistent with national planning policy and does it relate appropriately to the Council's Core Strategy?

Vision, Core Strategy and the Airport Site

11. The Plymouth Core Strategy (CS) was adopted in 2007. It provides the strategic direction for planning across the City and includes an intention to produce a range of Area Action Plans designed to focus on the delivery of the strategy. A number of such Area Action Plans have been adopted. However, as indicated by the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and as a result of the intention to review the CS and produce a new city wide local plan (the Plymouth Plan) by 2015, the Council has decided not to complete the intended suite of Area Action Plans and instead will subsume their intended content into

the Plymouth Plan. The Derriford and Seaton AAP is therefore the final such plan which the Council intends to submit for examination.

12. The Council considers² that the Plan has been positively prepared and is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Indeed, paragraph 1.6 of the Plan emphasises a commitment to a presumption in favour of sustainable development in line with the Framework (para 15). Subject to detailed consideration of the 'needs' of the area elsewhere in this report, the Plan has some ambition in the scale of development anticipated over the initial timeframe of the document (2006-2021) and it provides an indication of how development will be influenced to 2026 and beyond. Given the Plan's intention to complement the strategic aims (and plan period) of the CS this is understandable albeit the limited timeframe of the document does not demonstrate particular consistency with national policy as required by the Framework (para 157).
13. The Plan repeats the Area Vision Statement contained in the CS (Area Vision 9 - Derriford and Seaton) but contains a new Area Vision Diagram which is intended to replace that contained within the CS. The amended diagram reduces the originally intended Plan boundary by excluding the site of Plymouth City Airport, urban areas to the north and similar urban areas to the north-west of the A386.
14. The Vision Statement of the Plan is consistent with the CS. However and notwithstanding the Vision Diagram, the Plan indicates a different approach in its objectives to delivering the vision when compared to the CS, primarily with regard to the location of the proposed district shopping centre; this, in turn, raises the need to consider whether the Plan is consistent with the CS in relation to its economic strategy. Both matters are discussed in greater detail below.
15. Following adoption of the CS, the Council accepted³ a Notice of Non-Viability in relation to the airport and its principal use. At this time and amongst other matters, the Council determined to exclude the airport site from the Plan and to apply its pre-existing planning policies and guidance applicable to the airport. It is clear from the evidence that the airport site is of considerable interest to the people of Plymouth and other parties. The airport site, in terms of its substantial size and location and notwithstanding its potential use, is of strategic importance to the City. I therefore accept that the process of forward planning for the site is reasonably to be dealt with as part of the city wide review of the CS and with the production of the Plymouth Plan estimated for adoption in 2015.
16. Crucially however, notwithstanding the range of Sustainability Appraisal⁴ (SA) evidence and with acknowledgement of the representations made, the submitted Plan subsequently does not substantively address the proximity and potential future of the airport site. The absence of any informed reference to the use of this significant land holding which lies adjacent to the Plan area and was deemed by the CS to form part of Derriford and Seaton, with the implications that this must have upon key matters such as the local transport

² CS/01 Appendix 1

³ SR/48

⁴ LDF/41 et al

infrastructure and the overall volumes, location and inter-relationships of development, is to prepare a plan with a limited and insufficiently informed understanding of the broader contextual picture of northern Plymouth and its foreseeable future.

17. The exclusion of the site and the absence of substantive reference to its existence and proximity is an indication that the submitted Plan is not based upon the most up-to-date and robust evidence particularly in relation to the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area which would fulfil the aims of paragraph 158 of the Framework. It is difficult to conclude reasonably that the submitted content of the Plan is necessarily the most appropriate without full consideration of reasonable alternatives being informed by a degree of clarity upon the future of the airport site. The airport site is more than merely another site, it is of strategic significance and should logically form a fundamental factor in the planning for the north of Plymouth and Derriford and Seaton in particular. The uncertainty which surrounds the site casts a shadow of imprecision over the content of the submitted Plan. Whilst the Council has decided to address the Airport site through the production of the Plymouth Plan, that process would post-date the potential adoption of the submitted Plan potentially rendering aspects of its content out of date.
18. The Council views the submitted Plan as the delivery vehicle for the CS whilst confirming that the implications arising in relation to the future of the airport site are of strategic importance. The CS is programmed to be reviewed and updated via the Plymouth Plan. Given the immediate proximity of the airport site to the Plan boundary, it does not appear justified to pursue a delivery plan for a strategy adopted in 2007 which is fundamentally out of date with particular regard to the strategic importance and relevance of the airport. The justification and effectiveness of proposed development within Derriford and Seaton would only be robustly demonstrated in parallel with greater clarity about the intentions for the airport site.
19. The Council has expressed concerns⁵ at the implications of not being able to pursue the Plan with the airport site excluded. However, there is no substantive reason to consider that such an outcome would lead to the deferral of growth given the existence of the Framework, the CS vision, the relevant content of the CS and the informative aspects of some local evidence which has been produced. Whilst the existence of an adopted Plan would be preferable, the existing policy basis would enable the Council to determine planning applications appropriately as necessary. A quest for plan led certainty is not a reason to adopt a flawed document. The reasons advanced for pursuing the Plan as submitted represent insufficient justification to outweigh the inadequate consideration of the airport site and its relationship to this part of Plymouth and beyond.

Other Matters

20. The Council has undertaken SA which has informed the production of the Plan. The Council has confirmed that it remains satisfied that the SA adequately summarises or repeats the reasons that were given for rejecting the

⁵ CS/01 Section 12 Matter 1

alternatives to the content of the Plan at the time when they were ruled out and that, where applicable, those reasons are still valid. The content of the SA is referred to in greater detail with regard to the specific Proposals and Policies of the Plan below as necessary. Whilst the SA process could have more explicitly recognised the cessation of the airport use in its assessments for key proposals, this factor was acknowledged to a degree by the Council's work in 2012 when responding to alternative site proposals.

21. There is no substantive evidence to indicate that the Plan has not been prepared in accordance with the statutory procedures and associated regulations. Indeed, the Council's evidence⁶ indicates the methodology which has been followed prior to the examination of the submitted Plan. Such evidence shows that the thrust of the Statement of Community Involvement has been met and that the submitted Plan is in line with the Local Development Scheme which has been reasonably updated to account for changes within the City and the Council.
22. The Plan has had suitable regard to the Plymouth Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and has been subject to a reasonable Equalities Impact Assessment⁷ which appears robust in terms of both its methodology and conclusions. In relation to Natura 2000 sites the Council has undertaken a Habitats Regulation Assessment⁸ and Natural England does not maintain any objection to the Assessment or the Plan⁹. The Plan has been informed by robust flood risk evidence to which the Environment Agency raise no outstanding objection¹⁰.
23. The Plan, if adopted, would necessitate alterations to the Policies Map which are shown within Chapter 12.

Conclusion

24. Overall, the Council has sought to positively prepare the Plan in compliance with relevant procedural legal requirements and in accordance with the general thrust of the CS. However, it has had to respond to a change in circumstance at the airport site which must be considered of material importance to the Plan. An approach of omission may be reasonable in terms of the strategic review opportunity offered by the Plymouth Plan but to subsequently and effectively disregard the implications of potential uses for the site in the planning of Derriford and Seaton, including infrastructure, does not support a conclusion that the submitted Plan is sound.

Matter 2 – Place Shaping

Are the intentions of the AAP in terms of 'place shaping' informed by an adequate and robust evidence base? What evidence indicates that it will be effective in implementation?

25. Strategic Objective 1 of the Plan is focussed on creating a positive sense of

⁶ LDF/37 and ED/02

⁷ LDF/32 et al

⁸ LDF/42

⁹ ED/14

¹⁰ ED/15

place for Derriford and Seaton and complements the strategic lead provided by the CS. In these regards, the Plan draws reasonably upon documents such as the Council's SA, its own Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Derriford and Seaton Issues and Options (and Preferred Options) reports, the Derriford Development Framework Evidence Report and Masterplan Framework, the Sustainable Neighbourhood Assessments and a host of studies relevant to the Community Park. These identify the somewhat disparate urban characteristics of the locality and the potential which exists to develop the 'second heart' of Plymouth utilising the valley topography and other assets.

26. Simultaneously, the Council has drawn upon its transport evidence base, including the Local Transport Plan and Derriford Transport Strategy, whilst also advancing its work on the feasibility and implementation of Combined Heat and Power energy sources/network.
27. The body of evidence has enabled the Council to develop an adequate understanding of local urban character and how the issue of locally distinct development can enhance the sense of place within Derriford and Seaton.
28. Policy DS01 sets out the Council's intention to use 'masterplanning' to bring forward details of development proposals within the area. Whilst this is dependent upon an effective development management service within the Council, the principle should enable the Council to develop a cohesive approach to place shaping across the Proposal sites of the Plan. Invariably this is linked to the issue of effective delivery. By such means the Council could be able to create the strong and integrated urban form which it desires.
29. Policy DS01 also gives due consideration to the necessary matters of water resources and their management which, subject to the Council's proposed modifications agreed with the Environment Agency, should be effective in their objectives.
30. Policy DS02 follows the strategic lead of the CS and seeks to improve the permeability and connectivity of sites within Derriford and beyond. The Council's Design SPD provides additional guidance on this topic and supports the ambition to create well connected places with convenient interconnecting routes for all transport modes. There is no substantive evidence to indicate that the Policy is not justified adequately or, in principle, capable of being effective.
31. The Derriford and Seaton area contains distinctive military heritage assets whose significance is recognised by, amongst others, the Plymouth Palmerston Forts Study and the work undertaken in support of the Community Park. The evidence and Policy DS03 complement the provisions of the CS, provide an effective basis for decision making and are consistent with national policy.
32. Policy DS04 sets out the Council's approach to Green Infrastructure and is supported by a range of evidence sources which include the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The submitted Plan is consistent with the Framework and there are no outstanding concerns raised by Natural England. The evidence supports the thrust of the Plan, recognises the value of green space, including trees, within an urban context in a manner that provides positively for biodiversity interests. The Policy is justified and is not inherently

inconsistent with other Proposals within the Plan, albeit site specific developments, such as may affect the former Seaton Barracks site for example, will need to demonstrate how DS04 would be satisfied.

33. The Plan identifies the educational needs of the area through a range of evidence sources, including the Background Document to the Delivery Framework, albeit the Council makes clear that the existing and proposed educational capacity of the locality and the capital expenditure programme remains under review. The Plan and its supporting evidence demonstrate adequately that the educational needs of the area have been, and continue to be, addressed. A more detailed options appraisal for a new primary school has been recently produced and this supports a reasonable conclusion that there is proportionate certainty that the plan will be effective in securing the volume of school places and associated infrastructure required.
34. Proposal DS05 relates to the creation of an integrated Combined Heat and Power and District Heating and Cooling network for Derriford and Seaton. It builds upon the strategic lead provided by the CS and is consistent with the aims of the Framework. The Plymouth City Centre and Derriford Sustainable Energy Study provided the Council with useful evidence upon which to derive Proposal DS05. The creation of an Energy Services Company appears feasible¹¹ and the ongoing work of the Council, as seen in core document SR/60¹², demonstrates the potential of a district heating network within the Plan area. Overall, Proposal DS05 appears justified, consistent with national policy and capable of effective implementation.

Conclusion

35. The intentions of the Plan in terms of 'place shaping' are informed by an adequate and robust evidence base with sufficient evidence that indicates that it has the potential to be effective in implementation.

Matter 3 – Shops and Services

Is the approach of the AAP towards the provision of shops and services robust? Is the creation of the proposed district centre justified adequately by the evidence base? Will the AAP be effective in implementation?

Retail Needs

36. Strategic Objective 4 (SO4) of the Plan (Chapter 7) sets out, in summary, an intention to deliver a new heart for the north of Plymouth by developing a new mixed use District Centre at Derriford designed, in part, to fill the qualitative gap in food retail provision. This objective builds upon the content of the CS and takes into account the subsequently evolving nature of the evidence base. Of particular relevance to this issue are the Derriford and Southway Area Planning Framework, the Sustainable Growth Distribution Study and the Plymouth Shopping Study; subsequent to their production, the Council has commissioned a series of other studies including three from Cushman and Wakefield, the District and Local Centres Study and the Retail and Centres Study 2012.

¹¹ SR/43

¹² Update Addendum to City of Plymouth District Energy Study 2012

37. Upon reflection and following the Hearings, the Council has endeavoured to clarify its approach to chapter 7 of the Plan as shown by its Schedule of Proposed Amendments¹³.
38. The Plan identifies that SO4 will deliver a significant urban centre with a major District Centre. Whilst neither *significant* nor *major* are terms drawn from the CS, they do reflect the strategy for the city and also the subsequent evidence which enables the Council to determine that the District Centre will become *major* if subsequent expansion is undertaken. There is no fundamental inconsistency with the CS in these respects albeit the potential retail hierarchy may need clarification within the Plymouth Plan.
39. The retail evidence underpinning the Plan has evolved since the 2006 Plymouth Shopping Study. Fundamentally, the Plymouth Retail and Centres Study (2012) seeks to update retail floorspace assessments with regard to the viability and vitality of existing centres. The quantitative assessments of retail need can reasonably be considered up-to-date and reflective of current economic conditions; they produce different results to the preceding Cushman and Wakefield studies. In terms of comparison goods, the 2012 Study indicates a significantly reduced growth in comparison spending over the period to 2026 with a reduction in floorspace needs of 40,000 sq m. In relation to convenience goods, the quantitative assessments, which take into account new stores and commitments since the Cushman and Wakefield studies, indicate no requirement for additional floorspace in the period to 2016 with limited growth thereafter. Against this background and in retail terms alone, the justification for the Plan provisions is rather weak.
40. However, the 2012 Study appropriately incorporates an assessment of the qualitative retail needs of the city and the Derriford area. With due regard to the deficiencies/gaps in provision, the range of consumer choice, issues of overtrading and overcrowding of existing stores, specific locational needs and the existing quality of provision, the 2012 Study identifies a qualitative need for additional retail floorspace at Derriford. This supports the principles embodied within the Plan.
41. The 2012 Study identifies that the level of convenience floorspace provision at Derriford should be sufficient to fill the qualitative gap and be commercially viable¹⁴. The 2012 Study identifies 2,500 sq m (net) as necessary with a proportionate degree of comparison provision. This is reflected within the Plan. This figure is not precisely derived and is best used as a guide, particularly in light of the assumptions made in the impact assessments shown in the underpinning evidence. With regard to the Council's proposed changes to DS16, there is no substantive evidence to indicate that this guidance figure is not justified or would be fundamentally insufficient to provide a degree of flexibility in relation to its physical implementation.
42. The 2012 Study indicates that there is no current clear basis for planning for additional floorspace at Derriford in the period beyond 2021. Future floorspace is not precluded by the Plan but reasonably identifies the need for detailed retail evidence to be produced to substantiate any further growth.

¹³ ED/41

¹⁴ SR/59 Para 6.45

43. The 2012 Study has considered the impact of the Plan proposals upon the existing retail offer of the city. The greatest impacts, when considered in isolation or in conjunction with other city developments, are identified to be on the other nearby District Centres albeit of a scale that, in terms of the immediate time frame of the Plan, would not appear to be fundamentally harmful. The Council has suggested alterations to Proposal DS16 which would clarify the need for specific Retail Impact Assessments in association with planning applications for retail development at the District Centre and potential measures to control the unit sizes and their use. Such means would enable the Council to react appropriately to the details of specific proposals to ensure the wider impacts arising from the District Centre upon the retail hierarchy of the city are not unacceptably adverse. In particular, it will be imperative for the Council to ensure, through any Retail Impact Assessments, that the District Centre complements the primary retail function of the city centre. The evidence does not justify a more prescriptive and potentially inflexible approach.
44. Whilst the Plymouth Plan is yet to be produced, the 2012 Study provides a proportionate and robust justification for the general content of the Derriford and Seaton AAP. Subject to the Council's proposed alterations, there is no substantive contrary evidence to indicate that the Plan would be ineffective if implemented as envisaged.

District Centre Location

45. Proposal DS16 identifies that the District Centre would be located on the former Seaton Barracks site. This runs contrary to the CS Area Vision 9 objective 3 and CS paragraph 5.78, which identifies that the location would be most appropriately centred to the west of the A386.
46. However, I accept that the CS was based on the evidence available at the time of its adoption and that, as recognised by the Inspector examining the CS, further detailed work relating to Derriford and the District Centre would be required. Subsequent evidence has been produced which enables due consideration of alternative arrangements. The alteration of approach to the location of the District Centre within the Plan is recognised by the proposed changes of the Council which explicitly identifies that the CS is superseded in such regards.
47. Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether the evidence indicates that the proposed location for the District Centre is the most appropriate with due regard to reasonable alternatives? In this matter, the evidence has its complexities and can be (indeed has been) cited in support of a range of potential sites.

Glacis Park – South West Water/Dawnan

48. Initially, the evidence supported a site to the west of the A386, based on Glacis Park. The 2007 Cushman and Wakefield 'Report on Proposed New District Shopping Centre' assessed five potential options for the District Centre. This report did not support the use of land at the Airport, Seaton Barracks and Crownhill Retail Park and found more merit in the North West Quadrant and more still in the South West Water/Dawnan site at Glacis Park. The 2009

'Report on Proposed New District Shopping Centre' reassessed site options and, in summary, recommended ruling out land at Plymouth Airport, Seaton Barracks and Crownhill Retail Park whilst land at the North West Quadrant and Glacis Park were deemed the most realistic, albeit with limitations, for an early phase of development. Subject to cost assessments and timescales of delivery, the report endorsed the South West Water/Dawnan site with frontage premises as the most appropriate location to pursue the delivery of the District Centre.

49. The Cushman and Wakefield Report of 2011 once again reassessed the District Centre options. In this instance the difficulty of delivering the South West Water/Dawnan site was highlighted. Thus the Report summarily concluded that the North West Quadrant and Seaton Barracks sites were the most realistic options to deliver a District Centre and that Seaton Barracks was endorsed as the most appropriate location.
50. Submissions have been made to the Examination indicating how the South West Water/Dawnan site may be redeveloped to accommodate the aspirations of the Plan. Whilst these are indicative of potential layouts, uses and design they nevertheless illustrate that potential exists, including basic assumptions of viability, for a comprehensive approach to the District Centre in a location west of the A386. There is little evidence that, in terms of location, the site could not deliver a new heart for northern Plymouth with expansion potential.
51. However, the fundamental issue facing the South West Water/Dawnan site is its timely deliverability. In essence, the existing on-site water infrastructure is intended to be relocated leaving the site available for redevelopment. However and despite correspondence¹⁵, there remains some uncertainty as to the timing of the relocation. There is no substantive evidence that the site would be meaningfully available for reasonably comprehensive redevelopment within the next 5 years. The timely delivery of a District Centre, necessary to contribute towards securing the objectives of the Plan, is thus not evidently feasible. In the context of the Plan, the allocation of the site therefore would not be effective in the timescales desired.

North West Quadrant (NWQ)

52. Land at NWQ is identified by its proponents to be 6.6 hectares of brown field land used to a large extent for car parking, to be available for development and to have some reasonable potential for future expansion of any District Centre with the acquisition of neighbouring land which appears available in principle.
53. The NWQ site lies to the north of Seaton Barracks/Derriford Business Park, to the east of the A386 and adjacent to Derriford Hospital. It consequently lies within an area already well served by bus routes and is well related to other key sites within the Plan, albeit with limited visible frontage towards the A386 and with a gradient across the site.
54. An appeal has recently been dismissed concerning a retail led scheme upon the NWQ site and the Council affirms it has very carefully considered the merits of the site for a District Centre. With due regard to its SA, the Council considers the evidence does not support a contention that the NWQ site would deliver a

¹⁵ ED/35a

high quality mixed use major district centre within a reasonable time frame.

55. Nonetheless, the dismissed appeal scheme may not represent the only development solution for the site. There is no substantive evidence that alternative arrangements, which may be capable of delivering the aspirations of the Plan, are not readily feasible. The balance of evidence points to the potential availability of the site and, with regard to the submissions made, active interest from key commercial interests in developing upon the site.
56. I am mindful that the SA identified that *"with the exception of alternative b5 (Plymouth airport), there is little overall difference in the sustainability performance of the different district centre options. Those differences that do exist relate primarily to the likelihood of a scheme coming forward that provides sufficient financial viability to meet affordable housing and community infrastructure needs. Additionally, alternative b4 (North West Quadrant), which is accessed off the congested Derriford junction has a particularly negative impact on the transport planning issues, given that it fails to utilise existing transport capacity at William Prance Road junction and instead creates the need to prioritise as an early phase of transport infrastructure measures an expensive reconfiguration of Derriford junction"*. However, there is insufficient substantive evidence that transport infrastructure could not, on a site specific basis, be reasonably developed to accommodate the District Centre at the NWQ site.
57. Within this context, the evidence does not robustly enable a clear conclusion at this current time that the NWQ site is not a reasonable alternative which falls to be considered with regard to the evolving evidence of Plymouth's economic needs (referenced further below) and the continuing work on the transport infrastructure of the locality.

Plymouth Airport Site

58. As previously referenced, the site of Plymouth City Airport lies outside of the submitted Plan area although it did form part, for apparent reasons of its airport use, of CS Area Vision 9. Notwithstanding my concerns that the Plan appears to have been prepared largely in isolation of and without regard to potential uses of the airport land in question, the geographic location of the airport is towards the practical periphery of the Derriford and Seaton Area when assessed on the ground.
59. The Plymouth Sustainable Growth Study¹⁶, prepared to primarily assess the sustainability of option for residential and mixed use development in the Plymouth sub region, does not provide support for a new District Centre on the Airport site, although at the time of its production the airport was functioning for its historic use and alternative sites for an airport were being explored. Indeed, the site found no support from the three Cushman and Wakefield Reports. It is the airport's geographic position, away from the more central locations of Derriford which is a limiting factor in its suitability as a District Centre and which also limit the extent to which the CS objectives, iterated in Area Vision 9, could be satisfied.
60. The airport site is of a substantial size, would appear to be currently available,

¹⁶ SR/06 Section 8 et al

is submitted as being previously developed land and, with regard to the isochronal evidence, appears to be more closely related to a clear residential cohort than other options. These factors weigh in favour of its consideration as a location for the District Centre. However, with due regard to the SA and its addendum, the airport location is physically distant from the core of activities which form the focus of the evidence studies produced by the Council and is not consistent with the thrust of the CS to have, for example, a District Centre located with improvements to the A386 frontage and to resolve the broader fragmentation of large single land uses. The available evidence does not currently support a robust conclusion that the site is a better reasonable alternative for the District Centre at this time. The Council are suitably reviewing their strategic approach to the airport and its uses which is a sensible and appropriate mechanism for ensuring a comprehensive approach to its relationship with the wider Derriford and Seaton locality and the city as a whole.

61. The production process of the Plymouth Plan appears to be the logical planning vehicle for assessing the role of the airport site in northern Plymouth and any alternative uses which may be justified.

Former Seaton Barracks Parade Ground

62. Proposal DS16 identifies the former Seaton Barracks parade ground as the primary location for the new District Centre. As summarised above, significant support for this site, historically part of the Plymouth International Medical and Technology Park (PIMPT), was not identified by the evidence until 2011 when the potential scope for more flexible uses of the land became clearer.
63. The site is of sufficient size to accommodate a District Centre albeit the indicative design details available appear not to make the best possible contribution to improving the A386 frontage. Whilst there are issues to resolve, such as levels, trees and existing tenancies, there is also reasonable scope to accommodate further expansion into the adjoining areas, particularly the Derriford Business Park. These may take time but there is no evidence to indicate that, in the longer term, these factors are an irreconcilable bar to future expansion.
64. The evidence suggests that the former Seaton Barracks site is deliverable in the shorter term. The site also appears capable of accommodating a range of uses in line with the aspiration of the Plan and therefore has the potential to deliver the objectives contained within the Plan. However, and as discussed below, the site has historically been considered part of the Plymouth International Medical and Technology Park (PIMTP) wherein, amongst others, Policy CS04 applies. With due regard to the content of the CS overall, its previous promotion by the South West Regional Development Agency and the fact that it is a sizeable and vacant land parcel, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the CS envisaged that the site would make a positive contribution to supporting the strategic employment role of the PIMTP as a whole. With regard to the available economic/employment evidence, it is the uncertainty as to the extent to which this is required and will be secured which constrains the acceptability of the site as indicated within Proposal DS16 at this current time.

Conclusion

65. There is a qualitative need for retail development in the Derriford and Seaton Area. The Plan provides flexibility to accommodate such growth with safeguards to ensure it is complementary to the balance of retail provision across the city. The location for the District Centre is a finely balanced judgement. The Plan has been informed by a range of evidence sources which, most recently, support its location at the Seaton Barracks. The absence of clarity on the needs of Plymouth for the employment land contained within the PIMTP weakens the justification for the submitted site, particularly when the alternative of the NWQ site is considered. These concerns cumulatively undermine the soundness of the Plan when considered as a whole. The creation of the district centre as envisaged by Proposal DS16 is not justified adequately by the totality of the evidence base at this time.

Matter 4 – Jobs and Services

Is the approach of the AAP towards the delivery of jobs and services robust and supported by an adequate and up to date evidence base? Will the AAP be effective in implementation?

66. Strategic Objective 2 of the Plan seeks to contribute to the city's long term economic and social well being through the development of strategically important employment sites and education services. This is a logical position which follows the lead of the CS and the Local Economic Strategy and is consistent with the objective of developing a 'bi-polar' approach to the Plymouth economy. In so doing, the Plan aims to take a balanced approach to the provision of land, housing, retail facilities and other forms of development. Within this context, I remain mindful of the advice of the Framework. This places significant weight on the need to support economic growth yet also requires a plan to be evidentially deliverable albeit, with regard to viability, that any such assessment should be proportionate, realistic and reasonable allowing, where warranted, for the passage of time over a plan period.
67. The CS sets out the economic strategy for the city based on six priority growth sectors and is underpinned by an Employment Land Review which identified land requirements. In summary, the CS identifies the 'northern corridor' for further strategically significant business park development and this is reflected in CS Policy CS04 which, amongst other matters, safeguards and supports proposals to extend the strategic employment opportunities at the PIMTP and the Tamar Science Park.
68. Whilst the CS makes clear that detailed employment site proposals and allocations would be the domain of Area Action Plans, there is little substantive evidence to suggest that the CS envisaged the PIMTP being brought forward in the way shown within the Plan. Indeed, the District Centre was anticipated to be centred to the west of the A386 and not centred at the former Seaton Barracks parade ground.
69. It is imperative for reasons of soundness that the Proposals of the Plan are justified and capable of effective implementation. Indeed, the Framework¹⁷ identifies, amongst other matters, a commitment to securing economic growth

¹⁷ Section 1

through proactive planning. This should be underpinned by an evidence base that demonstrates a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area leading to an understanding of land and floorspace needs¹⁸. The Framework requires that Plans should be deliverable. Proposal DS06 relates to the PIMTP which is acknowledged by the Council as a 'flagship' employment site. The Proposal would potentially deliver 40,000sq m of gross employment floorspace, albeit not sector specific, safeguard provision for an energy centre and enable residential and educational development at its periphery.

70. However and notwithstanding any masterplanning process, there is insufficient clarity within the evidence base as to how much of the site may be acceptably brought forward, due to limitations with the existing transport infrastructure and its capacity, in parallel with other scheduled developments (eg Proposal DS13) ahead of the Forder Valley Link Road (FVLR) which is not scheduled for effective completion until 2020. Indeed, the Council indicate that the delivery of the entirety of Proposal DS06 is dependent on the delivery of a number of major infrastructure improvements¹⁹. Furthermore, there is no clear and apparent mechanism by which the development upon the site may be facilitated effectively in the face of viability evidence which shows, for example, that speculative office development is not currently commercially viable. There is no substantive evidence to illustrate that the core employment content of Proposal DS06 is capable of effective implementation in line with the assumptions shown in the Delivery Framework (and Background Document) wherein substantial levels of development are projected for the next five years. The balance of the evidence does not show that the PIMTP Proposal is demonstrably effective.
71. Furthermore, a key part of the existing PIMTP is the Seaton Barracks site, a relatively prominent, serviced and apparently 'shovel ready' location historically promoted by the Regional Development Agency for strategic employment purposes. It constitutes a notable proportion of the vacant land available for employment use across the Park. On the basis of the submitted Plan and Proposal DS16, it is not apparent how the development of this site for use as the District Centre will fundamentally assist the aim of Proposal DS06 to strengthen the role of the PIMTP as a strategic employment site.
72. The Council is appropriately updating its evidence base to inform the production of the Plymouth Plan, partly in recognition that the economic climate, within which the city and its businesses operate, has altered. However, the update is incomplete notwithstanding the fact that the 'Prospects for Plymouth's Priority Economic Sectors Addendum 1: Medical and Healthcare Sector'²⁰ has recently been published. Whilst the PIMTP has land uses from this sector there is no evidence to suggest that the available land would only be utilised for this sector. Consequently, only limited reliance can be placed upon this recent document, particularly as it updates only part of the economic picture of Plymouth and does not account for the other 5 priority sectors identified by the CS. For useful conclusions to be drawn upon the economic needs of the city, the implications for Derriford and Seaton and the PIMTP in

¹⁸ The Framework para 161 et al

¹⁹ CS/04 p11

²⁰ SR/82

particular, a fuller picture should be known. When armed with more comprehensive robust evidence, the Council will be able to plan effectively for the provision of necessary land and floorspace in support of its objectives. Such information is required to provide proportionate justification, in employment terms, for the introduction of the District Centre upon what has historically been a strategic location for employment growth in Plymouth and in particular upon a potentially prime employment site.

73. The Framework identifies that policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Whilst Seaton Barracks has been available for development for some years, the Framework acknowledges the need for a regular review of land allocations which it would appear the Council has now embarked upon in support of the Plymouth Plan. Given the acknowledged strategic importance of the PIMTP, the loss of employment land at the Seaton Barracks site in advance of the completed update to its city wide economic evidence base from which clear conclusions could be drawn, would not be justified. The District Centre would generate employment but there is no detailed evidence to indicate that, in terms of volume or quality, such employment would meet or contribute adequately towards the objectively assessed needs of the City. Overall, the evidence base does not support sufficiently the justification or effectiveness of Proposal DS06.
74. Proposal DS07 provides for 20,000 sq m of gross floorspace at the Tamar Science Park, 25% of which is to be delivered by 2015 and 50% overall within the next five years. Whilst the aims of the Proposal follow the thrust of the CS and support the 'bi-polar' approach to the Plymouth economy, there is also little evidence that the envisaged development is deliverable certainly in the short term. To the contrary, the available information indicates that under current market conditions speculative development is not viable. With due regard to the Derriford Development Framework Evidence Report produced in 2009 and informed by experience of more buoyant economic circumstances, there is no other substantive indication, including the Council's Delivery Framework, of how development may reasonably occur in the timeframes anticipated by the Council.
75. The Crownhill Retail Park lies to the west of the A386 and Policy DS08 envisages an intensification and diversification of uses. Once again however, the likely effectiveness of the Policy in securing its intentions, with due regard to the existing uses, development viability and uncertainty relating to landownership and lease arrangements, is not demonstrated. Whilst levels of development are projected to occur towards the end of the Plan period, the absence of a proportionate consideration of how the aims of the Policy would be delivered in light of known potential constraints provides little assurance that the Plan will be effective in this regard. With due regard to the Framework, there is insufficient substantive evidence that the aspiration of the Policy is realistic or capable of effective implementation.
76. Derriford Hospital is of regional importance. Proposal DS09 has been derived from negotiation and consultation with key partners. The enabling provisions of Proposal DS09 are varied and will be likely be delivered in phases; whilst there are few specific details of the availability of funding and the timescale for delivery, there appears to be ongoing work on a funding strategy for the

identified elements of the Proposal. On balance and given the public sector nature of this crucial field of activity and the longer projected timescales for delivery than, for example, Proposal DS07, it is not unreasonable to assume that the work of the NHS, particularly in the dynamic environment of healthcare, will lead to the provision of anticipated facilities during the lifespan of the Plan.

77. The University College of St Mark and St John lies to the north of the Plan area. Proposal DS10 seeks to strengthen the sub regional importance of the institution by enabling the provision of student accommodation and improvements to the transport infrastructure. The Proposal complements the provisions of the CS. The specific details of how the elements of the Proposal will be delivered are limited in nature although it would appear that stakeholder engagement, primarily with the College authorities, supports the ambition of the Plan and identifies Higher Education Funding grant as a means to aid implementation. Given the proposals are projected to be delivered from 2018 onwards such an approach is, on reasonable balance, adequate.
78. The Christian Mill Business Park lies to the west of the A386 and is occupied by a number of businesses. An extant planning permission for 12 commercial units is reflected by Policy DS11. Such a permission is a positive indication that the Policy may be capable of being effective although, in the foreseeable economic climate, there are no substantive details as to how this may occur in line with the anticipated timescale of 2016. Consequently the evidence in relation to Policy DS11 provides very limited support for the overall soundness of the Plan.

Conclusion

79. The Council has undertaken viability testing upon some sites within the Plan area which is underpinned by a variety of assumptions (such as reduced developer contributions) and which includes a degree of sensitivity analysis. The testing reveals the challenges faced by office development within the locality in particular and illustrates the deliverability challenge faced by the Council upon key sites within the Plan area.
80. Such work illustrates the difficult economic climate which exists within Derriford and Seaton. Overall, whilst the approach of the Plan towards jobs and services follows the 'bi-polar' strategy established by the CS, the evidence does not show adequately how, especially in the foreseeable economic climate, the plan objectives will be fulfilled.
81. The Framework provides a commitment to ensure that the planning system supports sustainable economic growth. However, whilst the submitted Plan sets an ambition for growth, its approach towards the delivery of jobs and services is, in summary, neither sufficiently robust nor supported by a satisfactorily adequate and up-to-date evidence base. The evidence does not show adequately how key elements of Framework paragraphs 160, 161 and 182 would be satisfied, particularly in relation to needs, barriers to investment and the deliverability of the plan over the intended period. The aim to deliver in the region of 8,000 new jobs and substantial amounts of new employment floorspace appears aspirational rather than realistically deliverable and the balance of the evidence does not support the overall effectiveness of the Plan

in such regards.

Matter 5 – Homes and Communities

Is the approach of the AAP towards homes and communities justified adequately by the evidence base and consistent with national policy? Will the AAP be effective in implementation?

82. Strategic Objective 3 of the Plan sets out the Council's approach to securing a suitable mix of required homes integrated appropriately with the area's green infrastructure, employment opportunities and existing communities. It builds upon the strategic base set out within the CS, particularly Area Vision 9 and its housing objectives.
83. The Plan's approach to homes and communities is underpinned by a range of evidence sources which, notwithstanding the limited regard had to the airport site, incorporates consideration of alternative approaches. These include the SA, the range of Sustainable Neighbourhood Assessments, the Derriford Masterplan Framework, the Derriford and Seaton District Centre Delivery Study, the variety of documents pertinent to the Community Park, the transport studies and the Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLAA). The thrust of the Council's body of evidence supports the need to create a new heart for the Derriford locality via an appropriate and sustainable mix of housing and other uses. There is no strong evidence to suggest that this ambition runs contrary to the objectives of the Framework.
84. The Plan is not prescriptive on the type, tenure and mix of housing required albeit some limited guidance can be found in the Delivery Framework. The Council intend to deal with such issues, to ensure needs are met, on a site specific basis. Such an approach does not provide plan led clarity as to how the needs of the area are to be satisfied although does provide flexibility to assess each Proposal site on the basis of the information available at the time such development sites come forward. I was assured by the Council that the Annual Monitoring Report provides a means to assess the breakdown of housing provided across the city which therefore provides a mechanism to monitor and manage the housing supply to address identified needs. The Plan sets out to deliver the anticipated housing levels shown in the CS and, on proportionate balance, such an approach is adequate.
85. The Council's evidence takes account of the topography of the area as it relates to potential housing sites, this includes focussing development away from the steepest valley slopes. I note that the site viability assessment for Proposal DS13 has incorporated a reasonable assumption for abnormal development costs arising from the gradient of part of the area. Overall, there is no evidence to indicate that the deliverability of the housing and community aspirations of the Plan would be impeded unduly by the topography of the area.

Proposal DS12 – Glacis Park

86. Proposal DS12 anticipates the relocation of the site's existing water management infrastructure which will enable a residential led mixed use redevelopment. The site is proportionately significant in terms of its scale and location.

87. As previously referenced, the timing of the relocation is uncertain although there is no evidence that it would occur comprehensively before 2016. Submissions have been made to the Plan which indicates that the site would be best used for the new District Centre. This is addressed above and for the purposes of this section of the report into the submitted Plan it should be assumed that the District Centre would be located elsewhere; on such a basis, the proposed mix of uses appears warranted by the available evidence, including the SHLAA.
88. Its reuse would deliver benefits to the area and contribute to the objectives of the Plan not only in terms of some 700 housing units, some 15,000 sq m of office space and green infrastructure but also in terms of improvements to the built environment which would incorporate the A386 frontage. The redevelopment of the site will need to take into account Policy DS04 and Proposal DS21 and there is no evidence that the Council's aim to achieve a net biodiversity gain would not be secured.
89. The A386 has, at certain times of the day, capacity issues at key junctions. As part of its approach to transport infrastructure, the Council has identified the need to make modifications to the junction of the A386 and Sendalls Way. There is no evidence to suggest that these are not warranted notwithstanding the difficulties faced by the Plan and its content to be able to demonstrably assimilate the overall level of development and its transport implications within the Derriford area.
90. The Proposal would only be capable of being brought forward when the existing use of the site is resolved. However and in the light of the Council's Viability Appraisal, there is little substantive indication of how the site would be brought forward effectively, for example to ensure that the office development, not currently viable in isolation, could be facilitated by the other aspects of the Proposal. Whilst recognising that redevelopment is unlikely to occur for several years and that economic circumstances may change, there nonetheless remains limited indications that the site will be effectively and comprehensively delivered. In terms of proportionality to its contribution to the objectives of the Plan as a whole, the absence of further evidence in this regard provides little assurance that Proposal DS12 will be comprehensively effective.

Proposal DS 13 – Seaton Neighbourhood

91. Proposal DS13 applies to a significant parcel of predominantly undeveloped land towards the south of the Plan area. The origins of its potential use predate the CS. Subsequently, the SHLAA, the Derriford Development Framework Evidence Base Report and Masterplan Framework have assisted the Council in formulating the Seaton Neighbourhood Proposal.
92. The Proposal aims to deliver around 770 homes, a new local centre, additional employment provision, additional educational capacity, the FVLR and the dedication of land for the commendable aims for the Community Park. The evidence sources support the principle and content of the allocation and have included consideration of the topographical constraints and opportunities of the area.
93. Submissions have been made to limit the extent of the Proposal so as to

maintain a separation from existing development to the west. However, there is no reason to consider the submitted content of this part of the Plan, which comprehensively enables a linked extension of the built environment, to be unsound.

94. The Proposal would essentially entail development of previously undeveloped land. I note the submissions which have been made identifying the sequentially preferable redevelopment of the airport site as a reasonable alternative. However, the Seaton Neighbourhood proposal would support the ambition of the Council to create a clearer heart to the Derriford and Seaton area that, based on current evidence, would not be overtly secured by deleting the proposal in preference to any alternative provision.
95. However, whilst I recognise that the Plan once again advocates a masterplanning approach to Proposal sites, the Plan does not provide proportionate clarity on how the development envisaged within Proposal DS13 would be phased nor when the FVLR will be required to enable completion of the entire proposal; indeed the Proposal refers to only a small proportion of homes being permissible ahead of the FVLR. The imprecision in these regards undermines the likely effectiveness of the Plan in this area, notwithstanding that a planning application for the site remains to be determined. The ambition of the Plan for Seaton Neighbourhood is therefore brought into question in terms of its timely, comprehensive deliverability and thus effectiveness.

Proposal DS14 – North West Quadrant

96. The North West Quadrant lies to the northern edge of the submitted Plan area. The Council's SHLAA has identified the residential potential of the site which, with due regard to the Derriford Masterplan Framework, has been carried forward into the Plan. Proposal DS14 aims to create a new high quality mixed use development containing some 580 homes, B1 office space, a mixed use local centre, an Energy Centre together with a range of transport infrastructure alterations.
97. The justification for the mix of uses is drawn from various evidence sources and I remain mindful that the site has been promoted for the location of the District Centre for which a planning appeal remains to be determined. As discussed previously, the justification for the retail element of the Proposal is, on balance, drawn adequately from the Council's main evidence sources although the extent of what might potentially be rather isolated B1 office space is less well founded. Notwithstanding the assessments contained within SR/83, the likely viability of a local centre in relative close proximity to the District Centre site is unknown. Nevertheless, the Proposal is anticipated to be delivering new floorspace by 2014/2015 which appears, given the commenced works on a new car park development, to be capable of at least partial delivery.
98. Whilst the available evidence indicates that the specific content of Proposal DS14 is potentially viable, there remains some uncertainty as to whether it is capable of being delivered fully in accordance with the timescales envisaged by the Plan. The effectiveness of Proposal DS14 would require careful monitoring although, as presented, it may proportionately be considered feasible and be

counted in support of the overall soundness of the Plan.

Proposal DS15 – Quarry Fields

99. The Council's SHLAA identified the potential availability of the underutilised BT depot (and field) to the north of the Christian Mill Business Park. The principle of the residential use is justified by the evidence base and there is no substantive evidence to indicate that the provision of a footpath or cycle link between Tavistock Road and Tamerton Foliot Road through Glacis Park Green Corridor would cause undue harm to the character or nature conservation value of Quarry Woods.
100. Proposal DS15 indicates the site would provide 'some 70 residential units' although the SHLAA indicates a figure in excess of 100 may be obtainable and submissions from interested parties cite a range of 110-150 units. The potential of the site should be realised by its effective use and not stymied by cautious estimates contained within the Proposal. Consequently, the Proposal could be modified to indicate that 70 units may be at the lower end of an acceptable development range. Overall however, the thrust of the Proposal appears justified and, given the relatively small scale of the site and the absence of fundamental constraints, reasonably capable of implementation.

Conclusion

101. The approach of the Plan towards homes and communities may, on balance, be considered to be justified adequately by the evidence base and, in broad terms, is consistent with national policy. The evidence, however, is less clear as to its likely effectiveness in terms of specific proposals; this factor undermines the approach of the Plan towards homes and communities and does not provide strong support for the robustness of the Plan when read in totality.

Matter 6 – Infrastructure, Implementation and Monitoring

Will the Plan be effective in its implementation? How will adequate and necessary infrastructure, including transport, recreation and environmental enhancements, be secured in a timely fashion? How will the Plan be monitored and are there robust contingency provisions?

102. In assessing the viability and deliverability of the Plan I have been mindful, amongst other matters, of the content of both the Framework and 'Viability Testing Local Plans'²¹.

Transport Infrastructure and Effectiveness

Modal Shift

103. Strategic Objective 5 of the Plan seeks to positively improve the functional connectivity and permeability of the Derriford and Seaton area. To do so, the Plan identifies the need for a modal shift away from high levels of car use, the need to reduce the severance caused by the A386 and a need to improve the transport infrastructure of the locality. Such aims are supported by the

²¹ Advice for Planning Practitioners – Local Housing Delivery Group

available evidence, particularly the content of the CS and by key documents such as the Local Transport Plan²² and the Derriford Transport Strategy²³ which appear robust in their construction.

104. The Local Transport Plan identifies the importance of reducing the need to travel through the creation of sustainable linked communities and ensuring that sustainable transport provision is an inherent part of development with a transformed high quality public transport network. The Council is committed to securing these aims across the City. The Derriford Transport Strategy is supported by transport modelling (Paramics).
105. The Plan identifies that the primary route through the locality, the A386, experiences traffic flows that are close to capacity at peak times of the day. The underpinning evidence, including representations made to the plan and my own visits to the area, supports this position and indicates that elements of the existing transport infrastructure encounter, especially at peak times, material congestion²⁴. The transport modelling within document SR/62 shows the limitations of the existing transport infrastructure in accommodating the levels of development envisaged within the Plan, even if subject to capacity improvements:

The extent to which the development of the AAP sites can be delivered in a sustainable way will therefore depend upon policy interventions and supporting measures that will reduce the car trips that are generated from existing developments, the committed developments as well as the Derriford AAP developments.

It is considered that the scope for further improvements to highway capacity other than the modest improvements identified in this report is very limited, in terms of cost and would also be counter to policy objectives. As such, the focus should be on measures including parking standards to limit the number of spaces permitted for new development, improvements to public transport provision, and travel planning.

The assessment of the Forder Valley Link Road illustrates the importance of this proposed new link into Derriford. It provides improved connectivity, additional network capacity and reduces pressure on the A38/A386 junction at Manadon, one of the key congestion hot-spots in Plymouth. This could prove vital in any future attempt to provide public transport priority along the A386 corridor.

(Summary and Conclusions SR/40 Appendix A)

106. The Council makes clear that a 'predict and provide' approach to transport infrastructure requirements arising from the Proposals of the Plan is not practical. To accommodate the level of development envisaged, the Council identifies the "very challenging" need to secure a reduction of approximately 50% in the predicted number of additional car trips arising from new developments. This may not be a 'target' but is illustrative of the fact, acknowledged by the Council, that a transformation in travel behaviour is required. The Derriford Transport Strategy states that a failure to achieve very low levels of car travel to and from the area during the early and middle

²² SR/45

²³ SR/62

²⁴ SR/62 para 4.4

phases of the plan period risks compromising the deliverability of the Plan as a whole and thus the achievement of the vision for Derriford and Seaton.

107. There is no substantive dissent to the Council's view that the existing transport infrastructure will be unable to accommodate satisfactorily a 'predict and provide' approach to the level of new development anticipated by the Plan. Consequently, Proposal DS17 indicates that the Council will use travel planning tools and parking management to encourage the modal shift required. Such an approach is intended to complement key improvements to infrastructure as identified by Proposal DS18 and the provision of High Quality Transport Infrastructure Interchanges as anticipated by Proposal DS19.
108. The Council's ambition is well founded and consistent with the Framework. However, for the Plan to be effective, the ambition must be evidentially deliverable. Indeed, I note that the Highways Agency²⁵, with due regard to its interests and the principle of the Memorandum of Understanding established with the Council, maintains its concerns as to whether the measures set out in Proposals DS17, DS18 and DS19 can achieve the estimated required mode share set out in the Derriford Transport Strategy.
109. I have noted the range of evidence which informed the submitted Plan and Proposals 17, 18 and 19 in particular. This includes the Derriford Transport Strategy and its mode share requirements whilst I have also had regard to additional evidence which includes the Linsig modelling information submitted by the Council at the Hearings²⁶ as well as the evidence relating to the NWQ Inquiry²⁷. The Linsig modelling does not fundamentally alter the thrust of the Plan. However, the weight which can be attributed to this information in relation to preceding evidence, is tempered by its particularly localised focus in its area of assessment, its exclusion of the Forder Valley Link Road deemed important by the earlier Paramics work and the absence of particular clarity in terms of its presentation and relationship with SR/62. This latterly submitted localised modelling indicates that potentially a reduced scale of modal shift, albeit still 50% for employment, hospital and healthcare developments for example, could be tolerated by the capacity of the local transport infrastructure albeit it was not submitted to me that the preceding evidence was superseded in such respects.
110. The anticipated combined effects of Proposals DS17, DS18 and DS19 are unclear. Whilst I appreciate that the range of means (and their efficacy) by which modal shift may be facilitated is broad and capable of being honed and managed over time, the modal shift requirement for the Derriford and Seaton area is significant. Overall, there remains insufficient proportionate indication that the challenging nature of the necessary modal shift is capable of being secured. The totality of evidence, which includes Core Documents SR/40, SR/62, SR/63 and SR/83, does not show that the overall level of delivered benefits necessary to support the Plan is capable of being secured.
111. The Council acknowledges the critical importance of Proposal DS17 to the success of the Plan. It has in place a City wide approach to parking standards and identifies a range of approaches which may be taken towards parking

²⁵ ED/32

²⁶ ED/25a-i

²⁷ ED/26-31

management. In addition, it places considerable reliance on the role of travel planning initiatives to deliver a change in travel behaviour. The 'Derriford Area Travel Planning'²⁸ identifies the potential of utilising a range of approaches to managing travel demand which include travel plans, car clubs, real time information, car parking limitations, and alternative travel options. As an indicative example, such measures could cut car usage by up to a third in high intensity scenarios.

112. However, whilst this study provides support for the measures proposed by the Council, it does not indicate the level of delivered benefits necessary to support the Plan and to deliver as anticipated in Section 7 of the Derriford Transport Strategy (Travel Behaviour). Whilst discussed at the Hearings, there is no substantive evidence currently available from the Council to illustrate how ongoing endeavours to secure a significant modal shift away from the private car across Plymouth or other neighbourhood areas has been quantifiably successful in recent years. There is little evidence, for example data from recent initiatives undertaken, that the car borne trip reductions referenced within SR/40 are deliverable in Derriford and Seaton. Whilst discussion was heard into the initiatives at Derriford Hospital, the available information was inconclusive as to the extent to which inroads were being made into the desired level of modal shift. This limits the weight which may be attached to the likelihood of the timely achievement of the necessary modal change within the Derriford and Seaton area.

113. Proposal DS18 identifies a range of necessary improvements to the transport infrastructure. These include two new link roads and works to the existing highways. Proposal DS19 indicates that six new public transport interchanges (defined as a 'high quality bus stop'²⁹) will be secured to serve key locations through negotiations with developers. Both proposals will deliver phased alterations to the transport infrastructure of the Plan area. The net effect however, is that the necessary modal shift in transportation away from the use of the private car will not be facilitated by infrastructure provision until such time as discrete elements are provided or key development sites well advanced. Whilst works in relation to the Derriford Junction and the FVLR are programmed currently to be complete by 2020, it would nonetheless seem that overall improvements will be gradual and therefore the necessary benefits accruing from alterations to the highway network or through more piecemeal improvements to the public transport network will not be realised until 2020 and beyond. This will affect the unquantified rate at which the existing communities of North Plymouth may undertake a degree of modal shift in their transportation arrangements which would be supplementary to the new developments envisaged by the Plan itself.

Transport Infrastructure

114. The A386 runs through the heart of the Plan area, dividing east from west. The Council is developing further its Northern Corridor Whole Route Implementation Plan within which the provisions of the Plan will be embraced and potentially enhanced. This seems most prudent. At this time however, the detailed proposals to encourage the modal shift and to increase

²⁸ SR/40

²⁹ See Glossary as amended by ED/41a

permeability and connectivity within the area and beyond appear primarily limited to those within the Plan and its supporting evidence. Indeed, there is consequently limited information as to how the severance caused by the existing A386 will be resolved adequately notwithstanding reference to the reconfiguration of the Derriford junction and aspirations within Policy DS02 and Proposals 16 and 18. There is a degree of uncertainty as to whether the Plan will be adequately effective in securing its aim, in a timely fashion, to improve non car based modes of connectivity between the east and west of this part of the city. I recognise that the masterplanning process may deliver further detail as to the location and form of any measures proposed but the broad nature of the Plan's approach to addressing severance does not lend strong support to the overall soundness of the document when read as a whole.

115. The Council's Delivery Framework³⁰ provides an indication of the critical and necessary infrastructure required to support the Plan and its phasing arrangements which show when the majority of Proposals DS18 and DS19 are anticipated to be delivered. It is clear from this evidence that some key schemes will not be completed until 2020 or indeed 2026.
116. The Council has prioritised the Derriford junction improvements and, with due regard to the speed of development occurring to the east of the city, has identified the critical necessity of delivering the FVLR. The evidence indicates that the FVLR 'has been identified through the transport modelling assessment as being a critical strategic requirement to enable the sustainable delivery of all planned developments in Derriford', which has been part of the Council's intentions for many years, particularly in assisting to deliver the high quality public transport network for Plymouth. Paragraphs 8.12 to 8.14 of the Plan are clear in the importance attached to the FVLR. The balance of evidence proportionately supports its provision and there is no compelling evidence to indicate that, alternatively, the use of the existing highway network will deliver the objectives of the Plan albeit the FVLR does not need to be in place before development can begin.
117. However, the cost estimate of the FVLR has risen whilst simultaneously its timing has slipped in the Council's phased delivery programme for a number of reasons which include the delays in the delivery of new development to the east of Plymouth. Whilst the prioritisation of the Council is understandable, the effect is still to undermine to a consequential degree the timescale in which a key part of the high quality public transport network can be delivered and whereby alleviation of pressure on the highway network can be achieved in the face of new developments coming forward. There is uncertainty for example, in how the FVLR will complement and serve the anticipated total levels of development proposed at the Seaton Neighbourhood, whilst the inter relationships between levels of development at the PIMTP and Seaton Barracks with the FVLR, the existing transport infrastructure and other planned developments is not transparent.
118. Furthermore and crucially, the specific funding arrangements for key elements of the proposed transport infrastructure are unclear. In particular, documents SR/63 and 83 illustrate the funding challenges faced by the Council in securing the delivery of the Plan. Whilst I heard that the Council has a good track

³⁰ SR/63 and 'Background Document' SR/83

record of attracting public grant funding and has a successful history in delivering transport schemes, such as The George Park and Ride, the public grant regime, considered to play a critical role in the delivery of the Plan, has altered in recent years. I heard how the current process of securing such funding for transport schemes across Devon and Somerset is emerging. At no fault of the Council, the overall picture is less than clear and is consequently uncertain. The scale of available grant funding for transport schemes across Devon and Somerset is not known to me nor are details of what other schemes across this wider area may compete or take precedence over the transport schemes within the Plan, such as the FVLR with its attendant significant capital costs estimated at more than £25m. The evidence does not automatically indicate that the previous success of the Council in obtaining grant funding will translate across the Plan period such that particular weight should be apportioned to its likelihood. The assumptions and theoretical funding capacity within SR/83 are not well supported by specific evidence and are insufficient to support a judgement that there is a reasonable prospect of the timely delivery of planned infrastructure.

119. Indeed, the basic assumptions made by the Council in relation to locally generated sources of infrastructure funding are, whilst appropriately cautious, insufficiently detailed. The financial modelling information may be an attempt to show theoretical capacity based upon proposed developments, yet I remain conscious that in the pursuit of sustainable development, the Framework requires careful attention to viability and costs in plan making and decision taking. In a dynamic environment where pressures exist on public and private funding sources, I accept that precision, especially later in any plan period, cannot be expected. However, the evidence base in support of the Plan does not address adequately the issue of funding infrastructure in a timely manner with due regard to contingency. Receipts from Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 are predicated on developments occurring in the Plan area and there is invariably uncertainty as to both their scale and timing. Similarly, receipts from any New Homes Bonus are dependent upon the phased delivery of housing and decisions to be taken by the Council upon its spending priorities. Both sources will provide funding streams but the extent and timing of such funding is only broadly expressed within SR/83 such that only limited weight can be given to its likely effectiveness.
120. Likewise and particularly in the foreseeable economic climate, there are limited details available of what and when any capital receipts from Council land interests will be realised and how, or if, any proportion of such receipts will be channelled into infrastructure provision.
121. Whilst the Proposals of the Plan indicate scope to generate additional business rates, such funds will only materialise when rates become payable from schemes delivered later in the plan period and there is no reasonable certainty that the potential of the anticipated £11.1 million will either materialise or not be reduced notably by other priorities of the Council. The scope for Tax Increment Financing within Plymouth is not yet finalised. The bid process relating to 'City Deal' is ongoing and the specific benefits accruing from such status, if secured, and the extent to which it will assist Derriford and Seaton is also unclear.
122. All funding sources are anticipated by the Council to arise over a period

extending to 2027, yet there is insufficient evidence that adequate funding will be available when required to support the infrastructure phasing anticipated, even for those elements required in the short term such as the Derriford Roundabout junction. When considered overall, the available evidence does not support the contention that there is a reasonable prospect that planned infrastructure is deliverable in a timely fashion.

123. The Council accepts that the transport infrastructure of the Plan area cannot accommodate the scale of development proposed based upon a 'predict and provide' methodology. There is insufficient evidence that the necessary infrastructure and scale of modal shift will be secured in a timely fashion to adequately mitigate pressure on the transport network in a manner that would link to the delivery of key sites, such as, for example, the District Centre. Indeed, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Plan will be effective in securing the modal shift anticipated over the plan period. Even if there is delay in the delivery of some key Proposal sites, as seems feasible, the underlying transportation infrastructure issues will remain. Overall, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the Plan will be effective in these fundamental regards and that the objectives of Framework paragraphs 162 and 177 would be met satisfactorily.

Other Infrastructure and general viability

124. With regards to required educational infrastructure, the latest information from the Council suggests a reduction in capital costs³¹ to a little over £10 million. The Council acknowledges that approximately 30% of such expenditure is expected to arise from grants with the remainder being funded by developer contributions and other locally generated funding sources. There is little available detail as to how such funding will be derived albeit there is no substantive contrary evidence indicating that educational requirements will not be met.

125. Other infrastructure expenditure is anticipated to be met through development proposals which, on a proportionate basis, is reasonable.

Natural Environment and other Matters

126. Strategic Objective 6 relates to enhancements of the natural environment and complements the aims of the CS. The evidence base identifies the character and green space potential of the Plan area and, in conjunction with various bespoke studies³², is supportive of Proposal DS20 as it relates to the Derriford Community Park. The evidence indicates that the net effect of the proposed Community Park will have a positive effect upon the natural environment of the locality. The Council's Greenspace Strategy Update³³ also supports Proposal DS21 (Glacis Park Green Corridor) which would reflect the value of its surroundings, including Crownhill Fort, and not impinge unacceptably upon existing or proposed surrounding land uses.

127. There is no compelling evidence to suggest that the Plan area and its proposals could not be served by a suitable electricity supply, whilst the evidence

³¹ SR/83 p3

³² SR/33, 56 et al

³³ SR/71

indicates that there are no outstanding fundamental issues of water supply and wastewater infrastructure which would act as irreconcilable constraints upon development within the area.

Contingency and Monitoring

128. The monitoring arrangements for the Proposals are reliant on broad assessments within the Annual Monitoring Report. Whilst there may be scope to hone the effectiveness of such an approach to ensure that the provisions of individual policies and objectives are being met, there nonetheless is a reporting process in place which would provide a means to monitor the implementation of the Plan. However, there is no indication that such monitoring could lead to reasonable management actions that would secure the effective and timely delivery of the Plan as envisaged.

129. Tables 5 and 6 of the Plan provide an overview of how key sites and infrastructure of the Plan may be delivered with a reference to 'risks to delivery'. The Plan however makes no specific reference to how contingencies have been considered, for example if grant funding for critical infrastructure was not forthcoming. This provides little additional comfort that the Plan is capable of effective implementation.

Conclusion

130. To be an effective Plan, the evidence identifies that a modal shift away from the use of the private car is required alongside the provision of critical infrastructure. However, the same evidence does not show that the timely deliverability of the necessary modal shift can be secured. Furthermore, the evidence fails to illustrate that adequate transport infrastructure will be delivered, linked to key development proposals, in a timely fashion. There is reasonable doubt as to the funding for key elements of necessary infrastructure, particularly transport and there is no robust contingency. It is not possible to conclude that the Plan will be effective in these regards.

Assessment of Legal Compliance

131. My examination of the compliance of the Plan with the legal requirements is summarised in the table below.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS	
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	The Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan is identified within the approved LDS October 2012 which sets out an Examination date of March 2013. The Plan's content and timing are broadly compliant with the LDS.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and relevant regulations	The SCI was adopted in April 2009 and consultation has been compliant with the requirements therein.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	SA has been carried out and is adequate.

Appropriate Assessment (AA)	The Habitats Regulations Assessment May 2012 sets out the Council's approach to the Habitats Regulations.
National Policy	The Plan does not comply with national policy where indicated.
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)	Satisfactory regard has been paid to the SCS.
2004 Act (as amended) and 2012 Regulations.	The Plan complies with the Act and the Regulations.

Overall Conclusion and Recommendation

132. The Plan has a number of deficiencies in relation to soundness for the reasons set out above which mean that I recommend non-adoption of it in accordance with Section 20(7A) of the Act, despite the fact that it satisfies the duty to co-operate in Section 20(5)(c).

Andrew Seaman

Inspector