Securing the future for generations ahead

Plymouth’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2020
Our vision

Plymouth will be recognised as “one of Europe’s finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.”
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These sections are currently being developed and are not included in this document.
Introduction

Plymouth aims to become “one of Europe’s finest, most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.”

This bold vision is shared by the public, private and community and voluntary sector organisations who make up the Local Strategic Partnership – ‘Plymouth 2020’.

This is Plymouth’s first Sustainable Community Strategy and builds on our previous City Strategy by looking further ahead to 2020. It focuses more on the long-term sustainability of our city and our plans for future generations. It sets out how Plymouth will fulfil its potential to become one of Europe’s most vibrant cities and how, by working closely together, we can achieve greater things for the people who live, work or visit us in Plymouth. We also want to firmly establish Plymouth’s place in the South West region, in the UK, in Europe and globally.

When we wrote the last strategy for Plymouth the city had made significant progress. Since then, the rate of change has accelerated. There is no doubt that Plymouth is on the up.

You will have noticed the physical regeneration over recent years. Investors have woken up to Plymouth’s great potential and the result is development on an almost unprecedented scale. These developments are not only bringing more investment and jobs into the city, they are also helping to build greater pride in our built environment.

The city is now more alive with new shopping experiences, more cultural life and new and exciting places to eat and drink. There’s a real buzz about the place.

Some achievements are not as noticeable as the physical buildings, like the millions of pounds of neighbourhood regeneration funding that we have secured. This has really started to change the appearance and feel of our most deprived areas and to build the foundations for a fairer and more inclusive city.

At the same time, the public sector has continued to improve services to local people through improvements in performance and by joining forces with each other and our partners to deliver services together.
We are addressing key environmental concerns and are planning how we will adapt to the impact of climate change, how we will use our natural resources wisely and effectively manage the city’s waste.

The city’s economy is more vibrant and this is reflected by increased average household incomes, which have improved relative to the rest of the UK. This is a result of positive changes in our economy, and we are planning for even more.

We hope this strategy will give you a clear picture of our ambitions for the city and will inspire you to join us in moving Plymouth forward.

We look forward to working with you as we rise to these challenges.

“\[I\] was expecting a run down naval town like many of our naval ports, but when I got there I found it was a really bustling city… How did you do that? There was lots of development and the city seemed to be buzzing.\]”

(Respondent for the Washington Post who visited Plymouth in March 2007)
What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?

All local authorities have a duty to work with partner organisations to produce a Community Strategy. The strategy shows how local organisations will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the people in their area.

The aim of the strategy is not to provide a comprehensive list of all the different activities going on to improve the city, but rather to set out the key priorities for change and actions to deliver them.

This strategy will:

- Inform people about Plymouth, the challenges, opportunities and priorities
- Provide clear direction to influence policy development in all partner organisations
- Challenge all LSP partners to deliver the commitments made in this strategy.

There are references throughout the document to other strategies and plans for those who want to understand our plans in more detail.

We are calling our Community Strategy a ‘Sustainable Community Strategy’ as we want to make Plymouth a place where people of all ages and circumstances choose to live, work and play but we must manage our social, economic and environmental resources so that in meeting our short-term needs we don’t compromise the quality of life of future generations.

Involving residents in shaping the way their area works is key to achieving a sustainable community. Plymouth 2020 is committed to engaging with local people and businesses in planning, designing and looking after the city and its communities.

As a partnership we are committed to helping Plymouth to develop in a sustainable way.

This illustration describes those factors that make a Sustainable Community.

These components of Sustainable Communities will be addressed through the objectives and priorities within this strategy and will be taken into account by all of the partner organisations when developing other strategies and plans.

Figure 1: National model for Sustainable Communities (illustration provided courtesy of Academy for Sustainable Communities).
How was this strategy developed?

The Sustainable Community Strategy has been produced by the Local Strategic Partnership, Plymouth 2020, which brings together organisations from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

Our job is to improve the quality of life in Plymouth by addressing important issues like health, housing, community safety, transport and education.

This strategy was built on an understanding of the current and future challenges facing Plymouth and public consultation on the aspirations and priorities of those who live and work in the area. These have been placed at the heart of this Sustainable Community Strategy.

What has our consultation told us?

We carried out general public consultation in Autumn 2006 and have also taken into account the extensive consultation carried out in November 2002 when developing Plymouth’s vision for our first Community Strategy.

Respondents told us that generally the factors they felt to be most important in making Plymouth a good place to live are:

- Low levels of crime
- Clean streets
- Affordable decent housing
- Health services
- Education provision
- Quality urban lifestyle
- Sustainable living / the environment.

When asked about their own local area, respondents told us that they would like to see improvements in:

- Activities for teenagers
- Street cleanliness
- Levels of crime
- Road repairs
- Traffic congestion.
Residents, businesses and the community and voluntary sector felt that the following important issues should be given more priority:

- Communications and Infrastructure (airport / rail links)
- Equalities issues
- Local transport issues
- Improving the city centre
- Improving our image to tourists/visitors
- Youth, family, future generations.

When we developed our award winning Local Agenda 21 plan, those consulted identified the following priorities:

- Creating sustainable communities
- Taking action on climate change, sustainable energy and our ‘carbon footprint’
- Addressing liveability through the protection and improvement of the environment
- Contributing to fair and ethical trade to reduce poverty and increase prosperity here and across the globe.

All of these priorities are integral to this Sustainable Community Strategy.

In the course of development this strategy was ‘tested’ against the recognised principles that make a truly sustainable community. This identified some areas of work on which we are beginning to develop a citywide partnership approach through the LSP. The issues below will therefore be developed further and more detail will be included in the strategy when it is reviewed:

- Reduction in the impact of climate change
- Our global responsibility
- Thriving and vibrant city centre
- Improved democracy and involvement
- Community identity and community responsibility
- Celebrating our heritage and promoting culture.

This is a time of great progress and change for the city and the LSP will continue to refine the strategic long-term priorities. This strategy will therefore evolve over time to respond to future challenges and opportunities.
The partnership, its commitments and achievements

The following organisations and agencies have been involved in developing Plymouth’s Sustainable Community Strategy through their membership of Plymouth 2020 – the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP):

- Plymouth City Council
- Devon and Cornwall Constabulary (Plymouth Basic Command Unit)
- Plymouth Teaching and Primary Care Trust
- Job Centre Plus
- Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Learning and Skills Council (Devon and Cornwall)
- Plymouth Community Partnership
- Plymouth Guild
- University of Plymouth.

Partnership commitments

The LSP is responsible for delivering this Sustainable Community Strategy and in doing so is committed to the following:

Community engagement

Residents have the right to influence the future of their area. Solutions to problems are often dependent on local knowledge. Through partnership consultation we will continue to engage with the community and enable them to get involved in civic life. We will also keep our communities informed about our progress.

Customer focus

Our customers – residents, businesses and visitors in Plymouth – are our primary focus in improving the way we deliver our services. We are committed to putting the customer first in what we do and how and when we do it and providing value for money when delivering services.
Community cohesion, equality and diversity

We will ensure that Plymouth is a cohesive community where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all
- People’s diversity is appreciated and valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar opportunities
- Positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods.

Plymouth’s diversity is increasing and we already have over 60 first languages spoken here. We will continue to value this diversity and promote equalities in everything we do.

Narrowing the gap

Our aim is to create successful neighbourhoods right across the city. This means places where people choose to live that are safe, have good housing, a good quality environment, with access to good schools, services and economic opportunities and have strong and healthy communities.

Plymouth offers an overall high quality of life but, as in other similar cities, the quality of life varies significantly across the city from one neighbourhood to the next.

We will work together to improve our city but we will particularly target the most deprived neighbourhoods to reduce the gap in the quality of life, prosperity and well being between those neighbourhoods and the rest of the city.
Protect, enhance, grow

The growth in Plymouth’s population will bring new opportunities for local residents. However, the growth needs to be carefully managed. We will work together to ensure that Plymouth’s environment and natural resources are protected while meeting the growing need for homes, jobs, services and travel.

Partnership

We have shown that we can achieve more by working together. We will continue to be a partnership with a purpose, sharing information and working with each other and our communities towards common goals. We will also ensure that we challenge one another’s performance in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.

"People want to be part of the solution and we will help them to tackle graffiti and encourage more people to recycle with more facilities and activities."

(Community Warden for Stonehouse)
Recent achievements

The Local Strategic Partnership has been together for many years and the partners have been working together to make real and lasting improvements in the city. Here are just a few examples of recent achievements.

**Plymouth: a healthy place to live and work**

- Opening of the Peninsular medical school, one of five entirely new medical schools and one of the first to be developed in the UK for more than 30 years
- 40 per cent more adults were treated in the community, avoiding the need to go into hospital
- Development of a new Local Care Centre at Mount Gould and Primary Care Centres in both Ernesettle and the East End
- Nearly 900 young people attended holiday coaching camps in 2006 and over 100 went on to join local clubs offering these activities.

**Plymouth: a wealthy city which creates and shares prosperity**

- The regeneration programme in Devonport won a Sustainable Communities Award from the Royal Town Planning institute for its planning and community consultation
- 91 per cent of new homes were built on previously developed land in 2006/7
- The launch of an Economic Strategy in 2006 which includes plans for a city development company and outlines how the economic backbone will be strengthened to support our ambitions for the city.

"I have always been very proud of where I come from and remain a Plymothian at heart."

(Sharron Davies, Olympic silver medallist)
Plymouth: a safe and strong city

- Plymouth was signed up as a national ‘Respect Area’ leading the way in promoting respect in the community and empowering local people to tackle anti-social behaviour
- We held our biggest and best Respect Festival celebrating diversity and are preparing for the 10th Anniversary celebrations in 2007
- The election of representatives from the community and voluntary sector onto the LSP Board and theme groups has increased involvement in decision making
- Burglary and vehicle crime remain low in Plymouth, compared to similar areas and we are beginning to see a reduction in violent crime
- Crime in the city centre fell by 20 per cent since the introduction of four new Police Community Support Officers
- We secured £1,060,000 government funding to extend the successful Adelaide Street Home Zone project in Stonehouse.

Plymouth: a location for learning, achievement and leisure

- 10,261 people enrolled on our adult education courses in the last academic year
- 59.8 per cent of GCSE pupils achieved A* to C – this is higher than the national average
- A new sports centre at Brickfields, developed in partnership between the Council and Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership using £4.7 million lottery funding and other partnership contributions.
Sitting in one of the world’s biggest and most spectacular natural harbours, Plymouth has an extraordinary blend of the old and new. Plymouth’s superb natural setting, together with its rich historic and cultural identity, shapes the city’s image and has a considerable impact on the city’s development. It is also a very attractive and distinctive location for both residents and visitors alike.

It is essential that Plymouth’s assets are used wisely and to the benefit of everyone. This means protecting the sense of place that is Plymouth, ensuring that new development relates to old, that the environmental consequences of our actions are adequately managed and insisting on design excellence in all matters.

As a large city with a population of over 246,000 Plymouth has a special role to play in the region’s economy. It aims to ‘become the economic hub of the far South-West’, meeting the needs of its surrounding neighbours in the sub-region, as well as linking the South-West to Europe, by sea and air. It must contribute to both regional and national prosperity.

If we are to meet this challenge, Plymouth must have a strong community whose voice and influence is fully recognised. We must have strong local leadership and creative partnerships that are built on trust, shared goals and a determination to improve future outcomes. Our ability to recognise, deliver and monitor success will be a measure of our ability to embrace radical change and to make the best of our potential.

While the potential of the city is clear, Plymouth does experience the problems common to many major urban areas. It has some significant pockets of deprivation, structural problems with the economy and much of the city’s infrastructure is tired and in need of investment. While many of our neighbourhoods already provide attractive living environments with good access to local facilities, there are some that do not. Positive action is needed to prevent further deterioration of their physical environment, raise skills and investment, reduce crime levels, and to reduce the number of people suffering from social exclusion, poor health and poor educational achievement.
We will tackle the underlying causes of these problems not just the symptoms that exhibit themselves in daily life. We believe that continuing to address income levels is the key to unlocking our future to compete with more prosperous cities, as this one factor is closely associated with a poorer quality of life.

With global, regional and local forecasts about the effects of climate change, such as increased flooding, threats to energy supplies, the disruption of transport and the impact of fuel poverty on people’s lives, we need to plan to address these challenges and contribute to a low carbon economy.

The number of older people is expected to increase as we continue to improve our standards of living. We must also ensure that local young people are attracted to stay in Plymouth and that we raise our standards of services for our children and older people.

Perhaps of all the major urban areas in the region, Plymouth has the greatest scope to continue to accommodate significant change and growth in a sustainable way.

The physical vision for the city centre and its surrounds (often referred to as the “Mackay Vision”) is seen as leading the way for the future of Plymouth. It says that the quality of life and natural environment that the city offers provides an opportunity to increase its population substantially in the longer term to between 300,000 – 350,000 people.

Achieving an increased population of over 300,000 brings with it significant opportunities and challenges to improve health, education, social services and transport as well as provide more homes, more employment opportunities, more cultural and leisure activities and more shops.

With over 60 different languages spoken here we offer a diverse workforce and cultural experience for all to share in.

The challenge therefore for the public, private, community and voluntary sectors is to successfully deliver this transformation and contribute to the generation of benefits for all who live, work and visit in and around Plymouth.

“Surveys by environmental group Encams show our city centre streets and pavements are more than five times cleaner than the national average.”

(Encams Survey)