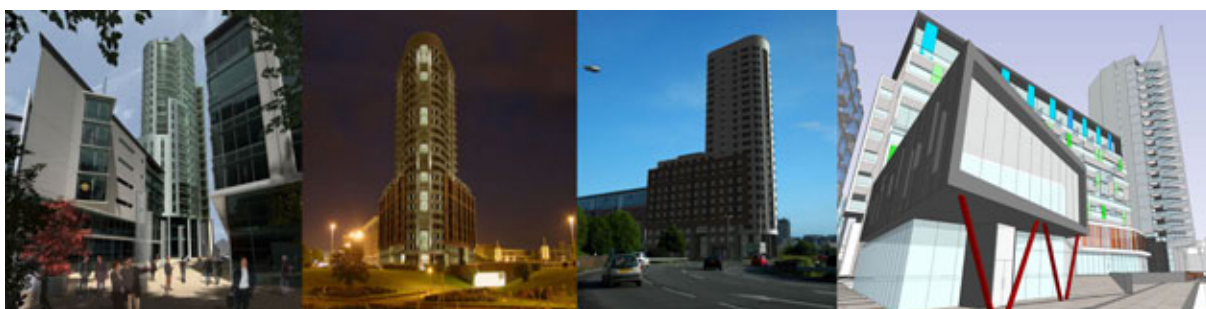# 4 Tall Buildings

Checklist for tall buildings

- Does the proposal include a tall building as defined in this document?

- Does the site lie within the zone of opportunity for tall buildings (see plan)?

- How successfully has the Urban Design Study justified the tall building proposal?

- How does the proposal meet the tall building evaluation criteria?

The need for guidance on tall buildings

Introduction

4.1 The need for tall buildings guidance in Plymouth was first highlighted by the City Centre Precinct Urban Design Framework (2001) which recognized that, in parts of the City Centre, existing building heights are too low and create poor enclosure to the street. It identified opportunities to increase building heights to reinforce 'the image of the precinct as the central focus of the city'.

4.2 The Vision for Plymouth (2003) reinvigorated the debate about tall buildings and the role they could play in Plymouth's regeneration. The principles of increasing development density suggested by the Vision also led to increased development pressure and more tall building proposals began coming forward as a result of this.

4.3 The Council prepared a draft Tall Buildings Strategy, in conjunction with Landscape Design Associates and this was published in 2005. The draft strategy has informed this guidance.

Some recent plymouth Tall Building Proposals

Recent tall building proposals in Plymouth

4.4 Tall buildings can have a dramatic impact over a wide area. To grant planning permission in an ad-hoc manner would be detrimental to the city and lead to the repetition of past mistakes. It is important that the impacts of tall building proposals are critically assessed before they are given approval. The Council has therefore decided to produce this Tall Buildings guidance to ensure that future tall building proposals are considered in a coordinated, consistent manner.

4.5 This tall buildings guidance focuses on the areas where greatest development pressure exists - the City Centre, Millbay, Sutton Harbour, The Hoe and the areas to the north of the City Centre including the University, Cultural Quarter and the central railway station.

Policy Background

4.6 The Council's adopted Core Strategy (2006-2021) supports the principle of tall buildings in central Plymouth through Policy CS02 (Design). Strategic Objective 4.3, Delivering the Quality City, seeks to "capitalise on Plymouth's unique natural and built heritage and create well

designed, safe, vibrant, diverse, sustainable neighbourhoods by promoting development that contributes positively to the unique image of Plymouth, including where appropriate new landmark or tall buildings". The Core Strategy Area Visions and Strategies broadly identify zones of opportunity for tall buildings. Policy CS20 - Resource Use, is also highly relevant, as all tall building proposals will be expected to achieve excellent standards in terms of sustainable and efficient use of resources.

4.7   It is the role of individual Area Action Plans to explore specific tall building opportunities in more detail. Those that are particularly relevant include the City Centre, Sutton Harbour, Hoe, Millbay and Stonehouse.

What do we mean by "Tall Building"?

4.8   "Tall Building" means any building or structure which is significantly higher than its neighbours and/or which recognisably changes the skyline. This is the definition used by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage.

4.9   "…*we do not think it is useful or necessary to define rigorously what is and what is not a tall building. It is clearly the case that a ten-storey building in a mainly two-storey neighbourhood will be thought of as a tall building by those affected, whereas in the centre of a large city it might not."* (Guidance on Tall Buildings (CABE / English Heritage (2001))

4.10 In Plymouth, and particularly within the City Centre, buildings are not generally high-rise - the maximum height being about 5/6 storeys. There are some tall landmark buildings, including the Guildhall, Civic Centre, Intercity House, Holiday Inn Hotel, Millbay Grain Silo and various church spires. Some of these tall buildings play a useful role in helping people navigate the city, but they are not all considered positive landmarks.

Benefits of Tall Buildings

4.11 The Council considers some of the benefits of tall buildings to be:

They can act as urban markers to widely announce the presence of important public buildings, spaces or facilities.

They can act as landmarks which make the city easier to navigate.

They are a means of maximising development density (although not always the only or most economic means).

In a cluster, they can define important parts of the city.

Well designed tall buildings can assist in improving the image of the city by creating a distinctive skyline.


Prestige tall buildings can attract national and international companies.

Tall Building Opportunities

4.12   Analysis undertaken through the Plymouth Rapid Urban Characterisation Study (2005) and Plymouth Waterfront Characterisation Study (2006) has identified the key components that generate Plymouth's image and identity. The components that have been considered in relation to the strategic placement of tall buildings include:

- Character Areas

- The Historic Environment

- Topography

- Important Views

- Public Realm and Green Space

4.13   In considering the image of the city, the analysis has concentrated on the character areas within Plymouth's central core. These areas – including the City Centre, University, Railway Station, Sutton Harbour, Millbay and the Hoe - are major contributors to Plymouth's historic identity and will continue to be important elements of its image for the future.

4.14   Conservation Areas like the Hoe and Barbican possess a distinctive character and urban form that tall building placement could have a negative impact upon. Therefore, tall buildings would be inappropriate in these areas.

4.15   The blitzing of Plymouth's pre-war Victorian City Centre, and the decision in Abercrombie's 1943 Plan for Plymouth, to adopt a 'clean sweep' redevelopment approach, created a distinctive arrangement of streets, spaces and land uses. However, the plan's vision of a boulevard city with impressive architecture was only partially implemented. Some existing building heights are too low in relation to the grand scale of adjacent streets and spaces. This creates poor street enclosure and fails to maximize development density. Promoting increased building heights that relate more appropriately to the width of adjacent streets and spaces will reinforce the City Centre precinct's Beaux Arts grid, whilst also intensifying development to create a City Centre that is more active and vibrant at all times of the day.

4.16   Areas where tall building opportunities exist within central Plymouth fall into two categories:

- A zone where there may be opportunities for landmark buildings or towers.

- Areas where there may be opportunity for an overall increase in block height, to provide a more intensely populated urban environment and better enclosure to streets and spaces. The opportunity areas highlighted include the City Centre precinct and Armada Way. More specific advice on intensification and block height will be provided in the Area Action Plans for Millbay and Stonehouse, City Centre and University and Sutton Harbour.

4.17   This guidance does not seek to identify specific sites where tall buildings would be considered appropriate. Instead, it identifies "Zones of Opportunity for Tall Buildings" as defined in the adopted Core Strategy and Area Action Plans, and illustrated on the adjacent plan. The onus

is on developers and their agents to justify tall buildings on particular sites by undertaking detailed urban design appraisals and demonstrating that the evaluation criteria set out in this document have been satisfactorily addressed.

4.18 Tall building proposals in areas outside the zones of opportunity, except where identified in other DPD's will normally be discouraged since such proposals are unlikely to meet all of the criteria set out in this guidance.

■ Zone of opportunity for tall buildings
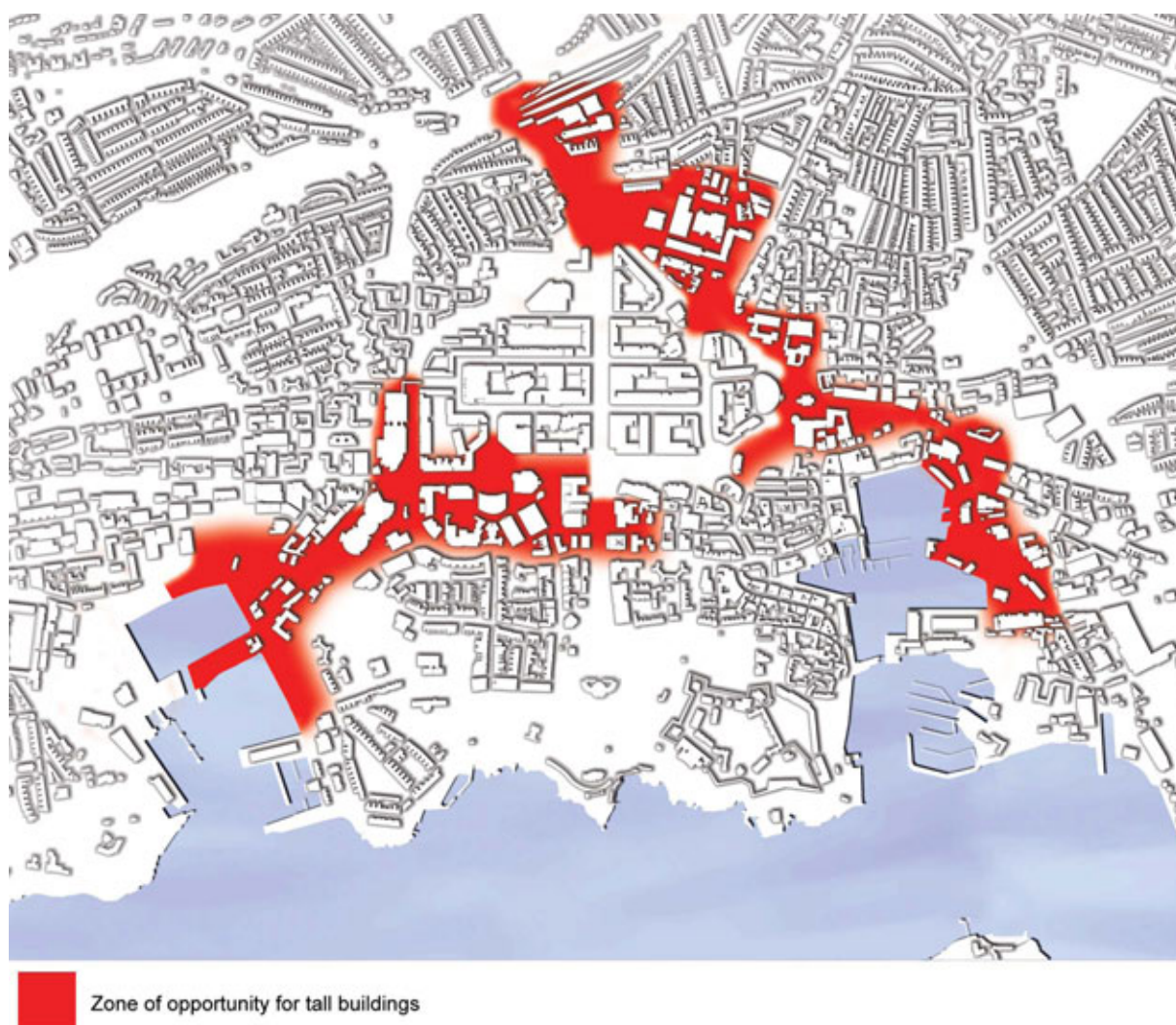
Tall buildings - Zone of Opportunity

Tall Building Planning Applications

4.19 In the interest of promoting high quality tall building design and innovation, the Council strongly recommends that applicants hold international architectural competitions for landmark tall building proposals before selecting an architect.

4.20 The Council advises pre-application discussions at the earliest possible stage in respect of all tall building applications.

4.21 Due to their intensity of land use, and the degree of change to the environment which their construction will bring about, the Council requires all applicants for major tall buildings to present their proposals in the context of their own Urban Design Study for the immediate and wider areas affected, and to demonstrate how their proposals respond to local planning and design policy and guidance. By Design (ODPM/CABE, 2000) contains useful advice on the objectives of urban design and other considerations which should inform the Urban Design Study as well as the Design and Access Statement which will also be required as part of any planning application. Where there are concurrent proposals for other tall buildings, or where others are likely to follow, the potential cumulative effect of these should be addressed by the study.

4.22 Visual material will be required to determine any planning application, identifying the impact of tall buildings on important views. Studies showing proposals in context at varying heights (and/or a physical model of a tall building in relation to the wider area) may be helpful. The level of detail and range of material required will depend on the size and impact of the proposals, and the stage reached in the design process.

4.23 All proposals for tall buildings should be accompanied by accurate and realistic representations of the appearance of the building. These representations should show the proposals in all significant views affected, near, middle and distant, including the public realm and the streets around the base of the building. This will require methodical, verifiable 360 degree view analysis. Where a tall building is justified by its relationship to a cluster, the proposals should be illustrated in the context of proposed and approved projects where this is known, as well as the existing situation. The appearance of materials should be accurately shown in a range of weather and light conditions.

4.24 All tall building planning applications will require a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

4.25 Outline applications for tall buildings will only be considered appropriate where the applicant is seeking to establish the principle of a tall building as an important element within an agreed masterplan for an area.

4.26 All major tall building applications will be referred to CABE and English Heritage; usually via the Plymouth Design Panel. In some cases, advice may be sought from the South West Design Review Panel or the national CABE Design Review Panel.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Tall Buildings Proposals

4.27 The Council will consider tall building planning applications against the following criteria based on the CABE / English Heritage "Guidance on tall buildings" (2007). This is summarised below:

- The relationship to context, including natural topography, scale, height, urban grain, streetscape, built form, open spaces, waterways, important views, prospects, panoramas and the effect on the skyline.

- The relationship with relevant topographical features and other tall buildings. The virtue of clusters of tall buildings when perceived from all directions should be considered in this light.

- The impact on the local environment, including microclimate, overshadowing, night-time appearance, vehicle movements and the environment and amenity of those in the vicinity of the building.

- The effect on the whole existing environment, including the need to ensure proposals preserve and/or enhance historic buildings, sites, landscapes and skylines.

- The effect on the setting of, and views to and from, historic buildings, street patterns, sites, spaces and landscapes over a wide area including:

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- Conservation Areas

- Registered Parks and Gardens

- Listed buildings

- Archaeological remains

4.28 Tall building applications will be assessed under the following detailed criteria

Relationship to Transport Infrastructure

4.29 The relationship to transport infrastructure, aviation constraints, and, in particular, the capacity of public transport, the quality of links between transport and the site, and the feasibility of making improvements where appropriate is important in relation to tall buildings because of the intensity of use and density that tall buildings represent.

Architectural Quality

4.30 The architectural quality of the building includes its scale, form, massing, proportion and silhouette, facing materials as well as its relationship to other structures.

4.31 The design of the top of a tall building will be of particular importance when considering the effect on the skyline. The design of the base of a tall building will also have a significant effect on the streetscape and the relationship of the building with the ground. Landmark tall buildings should be memorable in silhouette to help people navigate the city. Tall buildings must be functional and fit for purpose - providing high-quality environments for their users.

Design Deliverability

4.32 Design deliverability refers specifically to technical and financial deliverability of the proposals.

4.33 Tall buildings are expensive to build, so it is important to be sure that the high standard of architectural quality required is not diluted throughout the process of procurement, detailed design, and construction. Location, use, the commitment of the developer, and ability and expertise of the consultant team will have a fundamental bearing on the quality of the completed building.

Sustainable Design

4.34 Tall buildings should set the very highest standards in sustainable design because of their high profile and wide impact. Proposals should therefore exceed the latest regulations and planning policies for minimising energy use and reducing carbon emissions over the lifetime of the development. The long term resource and energy efficiency of tall buildings will be enhanced if their design can be adapted over time.

Public Space and Facilities

4.35 The contribution to public spaces and facilities, both internal and external, that the tall building will make in the area are important, including the provision of a mix of uses, especially on the ground floor of towers, and the inclusion of these areas as part of the public realm.

4.36 Tall buildings must interact with and contribute positively to their surroundings at street level; they should contribute to safety, diversity, vitality, social engagement and 'sense of place'.

Permeability

4.37 Tall buildings should take all available opportunities to offer improved accessibility and, where appropriate, the opening up, or effective closure, of views to improve the legibility of the city and the wider townscape.

4.38 These criteria are not listed in order of importance. The relative importance will depend on the circumstances of the site and the project. In the case of exceptionally tall buildings, some of the criteria will apply over a wide geographical area, and it will be necessary for the applicant to address this in the Urban Design Study. Additional information will be required to demonstrate that means of escape and public safety requirements have been given proper consideration.

4.39 To be acceptable, any new tall building must be in an appropriate location. The existence of a tall building on a site will not necessarily justify replacement with another building of a similar height. Tall buildings should be of first-class design quality in their own right. They must enhance the qualities of their immediate location and wider setting.

Further Guidance and Contacts

Further Guidance

Adopted Core Strategy (2006-2021), Plymouth City Council

The adopted Core Strategy document identifies "Zones of Opportunity for Tall Buildings" within Area Visions and Strategies.

All relevant national planning guidance can be found on www.communities.gov.uk

Guidance contained in the following documents is self explanatory:

A Vision for Plymouth MBM Architects and AZ Urban Studio (2003)

Guidance on tall buildings (CABE / English Heritage, 2003)

Guidance on tall buildings – Consultation Draft (CABE / English Heritage, 2007)

Planning policy statement 1: delivering sustainable development (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005)

By design: urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions/CABE, Thomas Telford, 2000)

Design and access statements: how to write, read and use them (CABE, 2006)

Protecting design quality in planning (CABE, 2003)

Design reviewed: tall buildings (CABE, due for publication 2007)

Building in context (CABE/English Heritage, 2002)

Contacts

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For advice on architectural competitions, contact:

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T: 44 (0)20 7580 5533

Question 4

Do you think the Council's approach to tall building placement is correct? If not how else could tall buildings proposals be assessed?

Any other comments about this section?

5 Street Life and Public Realm

Checklist for street life

- Does the proposal include significant areas of public realm, provide new streets, or offer the opportunities to improve existing streets? If so a public realm strategy will be required.

- Do the proposals provide a quality, distinctive and attractive design solution that is supported by proper analysis?

- Is there a mix of uses in the area? Do the ground floor uses in the building encourage people to use the street / space?

- Does the space have distinctive / memorable elements which can act as landmarks in the future to assist orientation?

- Are any activities proposed within the space? Has safety been a key consideration?

- Do the proposals have regard to maintaining important views and vistas within the city or neighbourhood?

- Are the streets surrounding the development proposal free of clutter and barriers to pedestrian movement?

- Do the proposals allow everyone to use the space/ street regardless of physical or mobility impairments?

- Have the effects of the site's microclimate been considered and included in the scheme?

- If trees are proposed is there sufficient space for their size and has the presence of underground services been investigated?

- Has the maintenance of the space been considered?

- Has there been any public involvement in the design of the space?

- Has a contribution towards public art been considered or discussed with the Council?

- Are the quality of materials proposed for any external spaces of an appropriate quality in terms of durability, maintenance and sustainability?

Street life and public realm

Introduction

5.1   Our urban environments are a complex mix of buildings, spaces and routes. Collectively these form places that support our everyday needs, whether this is a place in which we live, work, shop, socialise or a place simply to be experienced. Whatever our needs it is at street level within the public realm where most of us experience the urban environment first hand and here the quality of these areas can have a profound effect upon our everyday lives. It can even influence our view of an entire place whether this is for the good or bad.

5.2   This chapter has been prepared in order to promote the very best outcomes for Plymouth's public realm. The aim is to inform all who are involved in the process of changing our city and emphasises that the public realm is a key component of that change and is one that needs particular investment and attention. As David Mackay et al. stated in "A Vision for Plymouth" published in October 2003:

5.3   "The way we look after our streets clearly demonstrates our level of commitment to a civilized society".

5.4   Community safety is key in promoting high quality well used spaces and streets. Within Plymouth, crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour can have a considerable impact on our communities. As well as the direct costs of crime experienced by its victims, the fear of crime contributes to social exclusion, undermining our lives and destroying communities. Promoting good design and layout in new development is one of the most important ways in which the Council can address community safety issues. It can make crimes more difficult to commit, increases the risk of detection and improves public perception of safety.

Link to Policy

5.5   Plymouth's adopted Core Strategy provides the principle local policy context for this section and because the public realm is very much common ground to so many public issues this guidance understandably supplements many of its policies as outlined below:

- Policy CS01 Development of Sustainable Linked Communities
- Policy CS02 Design
- Policy CS03 Historic Environment
- Policy CS12 Cultural / Leisure Development Considerations
- Policy CS13 Evening / Night-time Economy Uses
- Policy CS18 Plymouth's Green Space
- Policy CS20 Resource Use
- Policy CS34 Planning Application Considerations
- Policy CS32 Designing Out Crime

5.6   This guidance also supplements all public realm aspirations contained within the Local Development Framework's Area Action Plans.

What are the key design issues that face Plymouth's public realm?

5.7 The public realm affects people and how they perceive and experience the urban environment around them. Many of the key observations set out in "A Vision for Plymouth" were very much about how people interacted with the public realm. It stated that the most successful cities were ones:

- Where the potential conflict between people, vehicles and uses is left intact creating vitality and engendering social tolerance.
- Where streets and spaces have a variety of forms encouraging social encounters.
- Which were easy to understand and move between destinations.
- Which have a sequence of quality memorable places, marking the passage of time and a city's unique development.

5.8 Whilst these observations do echo much of today's design thinking, they emphasise some very specific issues that confront Plymouth, and require particular attention.

Scale, Definition & Use

The post war reconstruction of Plymouth's City Centre and subsequent wholesale pedestrianisation of its central wide streets has produced large areas of public realm within which pedestrians have priority, vehicles are segregated and uses are strongly defined. This has potential benefits for the city providing a unique civic character and a healthy car free shopping area, although the City Centre suffers after the shops close as there are no other uses to maintain a high level of activity during these hours. A more diverse mix of uses would aid the use of the spaces during different times of the day and evenings

5.9 The scale of these spaces at particular points is considerable and it takes a lot of people and activities to make them vibrant, attractive and exciting. Whilst these spaces can be successful when the sun shines, events are being hosted and at weekends when citizens come into town to shop, it is however difficult to generate the same ambience every day, particularly if the weather is bad and the events calendar is free or during summer evenings. The same situation can also be said for many of the post war planned Abercrombie neighbourhoods, which often have at their centres large open spaces, that are often underused or un welcoming.

5.10 The perceived scale of urban space is defined by the height of buildings that surround them, or objects within them such as trees, monuments etc. Where these have a height in relative proportion to the width of the street, the environment feels well defined and comfortable. Where this is not the case and a sense of enclosure is lacking such spaces invariably become uncomfortable. The ratio of building heights to street width has been well documented and is accepted within design professions, as best urban design practice. Such ratios are set out in Section 5, Quality Places, within the Manual for Streets available from http://www.communities.gov.uk or http://www.dft.gov.uk

5.11 To address these issues the following points should be considered:

- The design of streets and spaces should be integrated with proposals for new buildings, providing good enclosure, with well defined entrances and active ground floor uses sharing the public realm.
- The design of single use pedestrian spaces should be carefully considered and limited to a few focused civic spaces.
- Where larger pedestrian spaces are required within a traditional street, these should be developed as wide pavements either side or centrally within the street. Such streets should allow for the flow of traffic and relate well to buildings around them with active ground floor uses (eg: cafes, shops) to ensure the area is used by people at different times of the day and evening.
- Where appropriate pedestrian spaces should include other uses such as street cafes, information points, cycle parking, and where appropriate car parking.
- Well designed shared spaces for both pedestrians and vehicles can be successful. The potential conflict that they provide generally results in the more cautious use by vehicles, being aware of pedestrian movement.
- In all cases care needs to be taken to ensure that designs meet the needs of people with physical or other mobility impairments.
- Bold design techniques can make pedestrian spaces highly distinctive and appear very busy even when empty simply by the use of pattern, colour and contrast.

5.12 The layout and structure of a place, how the buildings, spaces, uses and activities relate to one another, can affect its safety and sustainability. The design of places should be robust enough to cater for changing requirements. Crime prevention should be an integral part of the design process. The design process should thus include consideration of:

- Layout of buildings and spaces with crime risk in mind.
- Potential conflicts - have they been resolved?
- Crime - has the alteration, removal or re-use of buildings and spaces that are vulnerable to crime been considered?
- Activity - does the space serve a purpose and support an appropriate level of legitimate activity?

Identity and finding your way around

5.13 Within the city and its neighbourhoods Plymouth's public realm often lacks a strong identity. It either uses the same material over and over again, uses materials which have little historic reference, or provides a confusing mix of features that are poorly used by people. Such environments fail to provide inspiring, distinctive and memorable spaces that might otherwise characterise and promote parts of the city or help visitors to find their way around the city.

5.14 Unfortunately for Plymouth some of its best views are not available to people. The city's folded topography of many valleys does not help, but in the city centre tree planting has been used to such significant effect that primary views along the main axial routes are blocked. This makes it difficult for visitors to find their way and it also makes the promotion of city events through physical display hard to achieve.

5.15 The city also lacks a system of appropriate signage to guide people around the city. To address these issues the following should be undertaken in considering public realm schemes:

- The existing public realm should be properly analysed to determine its distinctive components and its historic development understood, this should then be used as a basis for the enhancement or the creation of new designs.
- The city's historic streets should be protected and enhanced preserving traditional street pattern and character and use of distinctive natural materials.
- The design of new public realm spaces for the city and its neighbourhoods should be undertaken with the aim of providing distinctive character appropriate to the place and time.
- A hierarchy of streets should be developed. They should offer clear views along route ways between destinations, developing distinctive landmarks so that people can find their way around the city with relative ease.
- Tree planting should be undertaken in a more controlled way to protect vistas and views.
- A clear system of signage should be developed that show people how to find key places in the city.
- Streets should be easy to navigate, i.e. they should be easy to cross - staggered crossings should be avoided and barriers to pedestrian movement should be reduced.

Distinctive and inspiring public realm

Variety and Activity

5.16 People naturally seek out the most comfortable, stimulating, or attractive environments depending upon their needs at the time and so for a place to be truly responsive to people it needs to offer choice and therefore a variety of spaces, offering:

- Spaces of differing scales from large open piazzas to small seating areas.
- Places that support activities and ones which can be more intimate.
- Spaces that allow full sun and others that provide protective shade.

5.17 In considering development proposals within the city it is important to pay close regard to the variety of spaces being generated, to appreciate what is working well, and where to create a balance of environments that can meet the needs of its citizens.

5.18 Activity in spaces can enliven and help to give it a particular identity. Uses on ground floors, such as retail, commercial premises or uses which are able to spill on to the space such as cafes provide activity and can help to make a public space or a street take on a different character. These uses can also add to the 'eyes on the street' in terms of deterring crime or

anti-social behaviour. Too much activity can however have a negative affect on such behaviour by allowing anonymity and more opportunity to commit crime. The following issues should be considered in relation to activity in spaces:

- Have a mix of appropriate uses been considered?
- Will there be activity at different times of the day, including the evening?
- Has the addition of residential development been considered?
- Has the public realm been designed to be safe and encourage positive use?
- if the evening economy is to be encouraged, is it diverse and inclusive?
- Are mixed uses compatible and successfully integrated with one another?

Access and Movement

5.19 It is important that people can move freely about the city and are able to reach their intended destinations without their route being obstructed by barriers. Within Plymouth City Centre it can be difficult to simply walk from one side of the street to the other without having to detour around such elements as extensive raised planting beds, water features, street furniture, pedestrian guard railing and other installations. In this respect it is important that public spaces are designed in a joined up and innovative way to minimise obstacles and barriers in the street.

5.20 The streets themselves can be awkward to navigate, with pedestrians having to wait between barriers in the middle of the road before being allowed to cross the next section of the street. Whilst there will in some instances be valid safety reasons for such barriers, the Manual for streets advocates design solutions which seek to avoid barriers to pedestrian movement and allow for straight over crossings of the street. The images of Kensington High Street in the first section of this document have sought to reduce clutter and barriers to pedestrian movement and the accident rate has actually significantly decreased as a result.

5.21 The city's streets and spaces are sometimes not accessible for all its users particularly those with physical or mobility impairments. New designs for the public realm need to ensure reasonable compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Approved Part M of the Building Regulations in relation to public access for new and existing buildings where they provide public services.

5.22 Community safety can be an issue when the connections within an area and to other areas are of a poor quality, convoluted or difficult to navigate through. Poorly overlooked routes, poorly lit pedestrian routes away from traffic, rear alleyways are all examples where the fear of crime and/ actual crime can occur. When considering a new development proposal the new routes within the site and those to the surrounding areas should consider:

- Are the routes where people want to go?
- Are there any places along the routes where offenders could hide unnoticed?
- Is it easy to understand how to get through the area?
- Are routes for different users segregated when they could be integrated?

Microclimate

5.23 Plymouth's extensive public spaces offers little shelter from Plymouth's wet and windy weather and as a result they are not used as well as they could. The City Centre's grid iron of wide streets does not help in this respect. The streets running east west are particularly susceptible to weather blown in by the prevailing south westerly winds and in winter it is particularly vulnerable to cold northerly winds being channeled down the city's wide main axis, Armada Way.

5.24 New designs for the city's spaces should consider the need for interventions which might reduce wind speeds and provide a degree of shelter such as glazed screens, semi-permeable structures, partially covered spaces and planting as appropriate.

5.25 It is also important to consider very carefully how buildings contribute to the city's microclimate and how for instance new buildings might create microclimatic change for the good or bad at ground level. Isolated tall buildings can have such an impact.

Street Tree Planting

5.26 Plymouth has air quality problems associated with certain parts of its road system, and this situation is likely to deteriorate if not managed as Plymouth grows in size. The city has already identified a number of air quality management areas within its Local Transport Plan 2 and has identified street tree planting as a measure to assist in reducing the city's overall carbon dioxide emissions and trap particulate pollution. Trees can assist in the cooling of the city in periods of hot weather absorbing heat, providing shade, and releasing moisture via transpiration. Trees also have a positive psychological benefit for most people.

5.27 More tree planting would also improve the visual qualities of the city's roads and was an aspiration within "A Vision for Plymouth". There is an opportunity to give character to parts of the city through planting formal avenues of trees and using particular species to define routes and emphasise road intersections. In so doing care should be taken not to block certain critical key views of the city and on approach to safeguard peoples' sense of arrival and appreciation of key features. The choice of tree species and its mature form will be paramount.

5.28 When considering new street tree planting it is critical to identify the extent of existing underground services as this tends to be the limiting factor in providing them at all. It is advisable to locate services on site rather than relying on paper records as these may not be accurate and it is important to determine if all the services located are operational.

5.29 A major factor in the success or otherwise of street trees is the care and attention that goes into providing an adequate and healthy environment for root growth and in this regard the following points should be considered:

- There should be a sufficient size of rooting area for the species selected (in case of avenues whether rooting areas can be linked).

- Rooting zones need to be adequately drained.

- The rooting zones should contain material that supports tree growth and will not become compacted over time.

- Adequate nutrients, organic matter and microbial activity which support root growth should be provided.

- Opportunities should be taken to use load bearing soils to extend root zones under paved areas.

- Root barriers may be required in some circumstances.

- An adequate regime of watering for newly planted trees should be agreed.

Safer Streets

5.30 Some of Plymouth's spaces can feel remote from the buildings that surround them and other better used spaces and routes nearby. Some spaces can be hidden behind strong enclosures such as planting and this can be uncomfortable to some people. Such situations can offer opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour to occur.

5.31 The city needs to develop a system of streets and spaces, which have a good visual relationship between buildings and spaces, where good natural surveillance from buildings can occur. The need for such natural surveillance is something which should be considered at all times of the day, week and year. Active frontages on new buildings can also aid natural surveillance and act as a deterrent to criminals, as there is always a risk of being seen.

5.32 Well lit streets and routes can also deter criminals as well as making people feel more comfortable and safe. However this needs to balanced against light pollution issues.

Sustainability

5.33 Plymouth has had a reliance on cheap concrete materials that have a short life and use a relatively large amount of carbon for their manufacture and distribution. Some of the materials used derive their visual quality from relatively high proportions of dyes in their manufacture, which fade over time loosing their appeal. It is important that the city makes a shift towards a more sustainable use of hard materials selecting, where possible:

- Natural stone which has greater longevity.
- Recycled products where technology allows.
- Manmade materials that derive their visual qualities from the natural aggregates within them.
- Locally sourced materials.

5.34 There is also a need for public realm schemes to include proposals for water conservation using, where practical sustainable urban drainage initiatives. The Climate Change section of this document contains more information on sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) and water conservation initiatives.

Management and Maintenance

5.35 Management and maintenance of a place ensures it functions properly over time and remains safe and secure. Whilst ensuring that the design and build of new public spaces is right, the management and maintenance is important in ensuring its continued use and safety. This issue must be considered at the outset so that the costs of ongoing management and maintenance can be factored in to the development costs. If places are left to become untidy they will begin to feel neglected, will start to discourage use and encourage crime and anti-social behaviour. The following should be considered in this respect:

- Management and maintenance should be an issue that is built in to the design process for the space so that it is an acknowledged part of the development costs.
- Cleanliness, tidiness and proper maintenance should be addressed regularly and promptly.
- Any signs of disorder, neglect such as abandoned cars or graffiti should be removed at the earliest opportunity.
- Regular watering and care of planting should also be built in to development costs.

Ownership

5.36 Encouraging residents and users of places to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their surroundings can make an important contribution to crime prevention. Designs, which have a clear definition between public and private space can help this sense of ownership. For example, 'knee' rails bordering front gardens provide defensible space for residents, and have been used to good effect in new developments within Plymouth.

5.37 Involving the community in the design of the spaces outside their properties can help to encourage a sense of ownership once the public areas have been completed. This has been clearly demonstrated at the Gunwharf development in Devonport. To encourage ownership of public spaces the following should be considered:

- Ensure that public and private space is clearly defined.
- Ensure that the space has its own distinct identity.
- Ensure that all those who should feel ownership are involved in the design process.
- The design should be of a high quality to foster a sense of local pride.
- The space should feel like it is under the supervision of local residents or businesses.

Public Realm in Historic Areas

5.38 Surviving historic floorscape makes a vital contribution to the character of areas.   The Council is committed to retaining or where possible restoring traditional surfaces such as natural stone paving or setts. Traditional surfaces in Plymouth were made of various materials and these included:

- **Limestone** - This was historically used for paving throughout the city, though only a few areas now survive. Good examples can be seen along Southside Street, in the Barbican, Adelaide Street Ope and Wyndham Square in Stonehouse, and outside the City Museum and Library on North Hill.
- **Granite -** This was used for kerb stones, setts and channels. Granite kerbs are still very common on many streets, though the granite setts and other historic paving that went with them has often long gone. Many back lanes still retain their historic setts and channels however. Notable examples include side streets within the Barbican and rear lanes in many residential areas such as Stoke, Stonehouse and Devonport.
- **Paving bricks -** Historic paving bricks and tiles still survive in a few areas such as the yellow Candy tiles used particularly during the late Victorian Period, along Fore Street, Plympton St Maurice, and along Poltruan Terrace, Stonehouse.

5.39 Local details include functional historic objects which add to the richness and local distinctiveness of an area. Examples include:

- Cast iron bollards around the quay edges and remnants of distinctive cast iron chain posts survive at Millbay Docks, Parade Ope and Southside Ope in the Barbican.
- Numerous cannons historically used for mooring posts survive in the historic South Yard of Devonport Dockyard.
- Former railway lines along North Quay and Sutton Wharf in the Barbican, within South Yard, Devonport and along the quay side in Millbay docks.

5.40 Issues to be considered when considering changing the street surface in historic areas should include:

- The identity of the original street form, pattern, visual quality and materials through townscape analysis and historical research (if within a conservation area, refer to conservation area appraisals and management plans on the Councils website).
- Where historic paving exists, the identity and conservation of key aspects of local character so that it can influence the choice of other materials.
- The conservation of the whole historic environment, the relationship between the buildings, the street, and the footways.

- The retention of historic surfacing, respecting the scale of materials and bond, traditional details and pattern of locally traditional paving.
- The natural materials.
- The maintenance of original kerb lines to preserve the historic form of the street.

Public Art

Examples of public art around the country

5.41 Core Strategy Policy CS34 seeks to ensure that development proposals incorporate public spaces, landscaping and public art at the start of the design process. There has been a tendency to see such issues as add ons which are really only given consideration after the main proposal has been designed.They also tend to be the issues which are cut out of proposals during the construction phases as development costs rise. However these issues should be considered as an integral part of the design process when all other key issues are being considered should be built into the development costing process.

5.42 Public art is an opportunity for the city to express its culture and history through a range of media and take a wide variety of forms ranging from the entire public realm to discrete pieces of work and from temporary exhibitions and events to permanent works. Works of public art in the public realm can be very positive, they can help to generate distinctive and characteristic spaces with the city and they can provide landmarks and features to guide people.

5.43 With the development of significant projects there will be an expectation that a contribution towards public art will be required. It will be important for the developer to determine with the Council how public art will be incorporated into the scheme, whether this might be applicable on site or off site or provided for in a Section 106 Agreement. Where works of art are to be delivered the engagement of an artist from an early stage in a development project is required. This invariably brings about a positive change of mindset and working practice among the other professionals involved and can lead to some very creative outcomes. The table below illustrates the process for including public artists into the design process

Examples of public art around the country

Stage 1. Developer to contact the Council to discuss whether public art is required and whether it should be provided on site or make a contribution to a wider strategic art project.
Stage 2. Developer to draw up a brief and appoint lead artist to work with the design team on a master plan.
Stage 3. Lead artist to draw up a public art strategy and present to the Council as part of pre application discussions.
Stage 4. Lead artist and developer to select individual artists.
Stage 5. Lead artist and developer to review detailed designs.
Stage 6. Developer to submit the designs to the Council at pre application stage.
Stage 7. Developer to submit the planning application.
Stage 8. Developer and the Council through planning conditions to oversee the installation.

How can a public realm scheme be best developed for submission with a planning application?

5.44 It is important that developers and their agents take a proactive approach and seek early advice from the Council's Planning Service especially for large developments, which impact upon the city's streets and important spaces as these issues often can be neglected and significant opportunities missed.

5.45 Pre-application discussions are therefore seen as an important part of that process and developers will be encouraged to present their design concepts in sketch form so that early ideas can be understood and are able to be influenced by reasonable planning expectations before design and commercial constraints have been fixed.

5.46 Such expectations in relation to the public realm might mean the extent of the application site is drawn beyond the traditional site boundary (red edge of the application) in order to improve the development's setting and/or the city's public realm. It may also be considered prudent for

the city to work closely with developers in certain circumstances to achieve wider benefits for the public realm using accumulated Section 106 contributions from other developments collected in the locality.

What is a public realm strategy?

5.47 A Public Realm Strategy is a simple, but comprehensive sketch design for the future detailing of the public realm to be included as part of a planning application. It should be undertaken by the applicant and indicate the function, extent, character and quality of the public realm together with principle works so that all parties concerned understand what it is they are committing themselves to. Importantly in commercial terms such a strategy should be measured and costed early in the process to ensure it is deliverable.

5.48 Public Realm strategies will be appropriate for all major applications, especially if they have significant implications on the public realm. The public realm strategy is particularly useful for outline applications where public realm and landscape issues are reserved matters. It can be used to explain the design principles that will help to inform the future detailed public realm scheme.

5.49 Typically a Public Realm Strategy should deal only with design principles and not details. It should identify the following:

- The extent of the public realm (open space, streets, & spaces) covered.
- The extent of the land envisaged for adoption by the local authority, or to be adopted by a management company or other body.
- The design concept for the public realm, identifying its principle character including the proposed design style, whether this be contemporary, or traditional.
- The principle function of the space, whether it includes vehicles, pedestrians or whether it be shared, private or public. This should include a statement of uses and activities that the space would support, for example, ground floor café/bar uses, informal promenade, civic function, events, performances, resting places, seating areas, sheltered space, children's play etc.
- The development constraints and opportunities, in particular routes of principle services below and above ground and the need for new fundamental service infrastructure where known.
- A site survey indicating existing and proposed levels.
- Proposals for public art.
- The extent of hard paved materials as well as soft landscaping proposals.
- The form and extent of planting (hedges, shrub planting, ground cover etc).
- The concept for street furniture and street or space lighting.
- The concept for engineering features or specialist structures, for example bridges, fountains, shelters, viewing platforms and childrens' play spaces.

5.50 This information is best understood by an illustrative drawing with annotation, however it may take other forms with pictorial illustration of best practice to describe character.

5.51 The Public Realm Strategy should be included in a section 106 Agreement or unilateral undertaking and legally referenced to the construction and occupation of the building form to which it relates.

5.52 It is important to note that the public realm strategy is not intended to replace planning conditions, as they would still be applicable to secure the detail submission.

Legislation

5.53 The following legislation is relevant to the public realm:

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, which emphasises the importance of creating developments which have well-planned, high quality, and inclusive public and private spaces that bring people together. Planning obligations may be used to prescribe the nature of the development, or mitigate or compensate for impacts of the development, to ensure that a high standard of design is achieved in the public realm.
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, which seeks to promote high quality design, improve the quality of the public realm and protect and enhance the architectural and historic heritage of centres.
- The Highways Act 1980, and of particular relevance Sections 38 for making of new adoptable streets, and Section 278 alterations to existing highways infrastructure and sections 219 - 225, relating to payments for future maintenance liabilities.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, information available from the Disability Rights Commission
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/cda places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with regard to the likely effects of crime and disorder in their areas in partnership with the police and other public bodies. Recent Government guidance set out in 'Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention' (ODPM, 2004), provides best practice and guidance on designing out crime and 'designing in' community safety as key to the delivery of safe and sustainable communities. (www.communities.gov.uk).

Further Guidance and Contacts

Further Guidance

From a national perspective what makes a successful urban environment and public realm is embodied in the following guidance:

- The Manual for Streets, DCLG & DOT June 2007
- This Way to Better Streets, CABE July 2007
- Paved With Gold: the Real Value of Street Design July 2007
- DCLG Circular 01/2006 setting out guidance on Design and Access statements.
- Paving the Way ODPM and CABE 2002
- By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practice –DTLR and CABE 2001. This document sets out the principles of good urban design including design principles for the public realm.
- By Design, Better Places to Live: A companion guide to PPG 3 - DTLR and CABE 2001. This document sets out the principles of good urban design within housing developments and also includes design principles for the public realm.
- Urban Design Compendium – English Partnerships & Housing Corporation 2000.
- From Design Policy to Design Quality – RTPI 2002.
- Towards an Urban Renaissance – 1999 Urban Task Force Report chaired by Lord Rodgers.
- Local transport Plan 2006 - 2011 - PCC.
- Further guidance on community safety can be found from:
- Plymouth's Crime Reduction Strategy is designed to build on the success of the previous strategies to reduce crime levels within the City and make Plymouth a safer and more attractive place.
- The Plymouth Community Safety Partnership continues to provide a framework for partnership working to bring about safer communities and to meet the government objective that 'people are and fell more secure in their homes and daily lives'.The Partnership produce the Crime and Disorder Strategy which includes Police recorded crime and is available at http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/crimereductionstrategy20052008
- Manual for Streets, 2007, DoT -www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/ places well-designed residential streets at the heart of sustainable communities.

Contacts

The Landscape Institute
33 Great Portland Street
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www.landscapeinstitute.org

CABE Space
The Tower Building
1 Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN
www.cabe.org.uk

The Urban Design Group
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ
www.udg.org.uk

The Police Architectural Liaison Officer
Devon and Cornwall Police
Charles Cross Police Station
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Question 5

Will the guidance in this section make you feel safer in the City's streets and spaces? If not, what else could we do?

Any other comments about this section?