

FOR THE CITY CENTRE

Pledge 82 – Create new shop units to attract retailers

What we said we would do: We will work with investors to create new shop units to attract retailers currently missing from our city centre.

What we wanted to achieve: Plymouth City Centre has a high quantum of retail floor space relative to its population and catchment. However, due to its age and condition much of this space is considered to be of low quality and not appealing to modern retailers. Similarly, the ageing condition of some of the City Centre streets does not provide the quality of environment to attract some high quality retail and leisure operators currently absent from the City.

To address this issue we said that we would work in partnership with key City Centre landlords to create an environment that is appealing to inward investors.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the high street retail industry with many businesses unable to trade for significant parts of the year and footfall between 50-80% below seasonal averages. This has accelerated the demise of some troubled operators such as Arcadia and Debenhams and has and will lead to more vacancies on our high street.

What we have done: We have worked in partnership with the City Centre's biggest commercial landlord British Land to prepare a comprehensive upgrade to the prime shopping area of Old Town Street and New George Street East to improve connectivity between Drakes Circus and The Barcode. This scheme includes comprehensive refurbishment of the commercial units in Norwich Union House, provision for up to six new retail 'pavilions' in the street and transformation of the public realm. The scheme was granted planning consent in 2019. Under the agreement, Plymouth City Council will implement the public realm improvements on its land and British Land will deliver the commercial space when economically viable to do so. PCC commenced enabling works late 2020, relocating the taxi rank from Old Town Street to Eastlake Street and Wimple Street, and aims to commence construction of the main works Spring 2021.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic we have worked closely with the City Centre Company to help retail businesses through this difficult time, providing support on COVID Secure trading, access to funding support and implementing social distancing measures. Under our Resurgam - City Centre Renaissance plan we have created the shop 4 Plymouth online shopping facility for businesses and launched the Geddon campaign and are working on a meanwhile use scheme for vacant units. This has helped our partners to bring new brands Brewdog, Hugo Boss, German Donner Kebab and OYO hotel to the City Centre.

What's next: In Spring we will commence construction of the Old Town Street and new George Street public realm works and develop projects for Civic Square and Armada Way. When current trading restrictions are eased we will launch the Plymouth Your Space meanwhile use programme to help fill vacant units. We will secure the £12m Future High Street Funding for works to the Civic Centre and Guildhall and drive forward plans for the redevelopment of Colin Campbell Court, bringing new uses into the City Centre to boost footfall and retail trading.

Find out more!

Here is a news story about our work to deliver the pledge:

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/bigbuild/betterplacesplymouth/oldtownstreetandnewgeorgestreet>

