

I Introduction

- 1.1 The Plymouth Plan is the city's long term strategic plan, owned not just by the City Council but also by partners and stakeholders in the city.
- 1.2 The plan was first adopted by the City Council in 2015 after an extended period of engagement and conversations with the city.
- 1.3 Since that time, it has undergone three 'refreshes', where limited updates were made to the plan:
- In February 2017, when the decision taken in 2016 to prepare a Joint Local Plan with South Hams and West Devon necessitated some changes to the Plymouth Plan.
 - In March 2019, when the formal adoption of the Joint Local Plan necessitated the need for a further refresh of the Plymouth Plan, making the Plymouth elements of the Joint Local Plan in effect the Plymouth Plan's spatial strategy.
 - In January 2021, when the Plymouth Plan was brought into alignment with the Climate Emergency Declaration made by City Council in March 2019.
- 1.4 However, there has never been a comprehensive review of the Plymouth Plan and therefore much of its content and language is as it was in 2015.

2 About the Plymouth Plan

- 2.1 The concept of the Plymouth Plan grew out of a series of challenges identified by city leaders back in 2012. There was a growing sense of frustration about the sheer number of plans and strategies that the city had, many of which had different visions for the city and used different assumptions about things such as demographic forecasts. This lacked coordination and made it difficult for the city to speak with a single voice.
- 2.2 The outcome was the launching by Cabinet on 11 September 2012 of the Plymouth Plan project, something that was to prove quite unique in UK local government and ultimately won numerous awards, including at national and international level.
- 2.3 The intention behind the Plymouth Plan was that this would be more than just a strategy, but it that would be part of a wider system that connects strategy to delivery, and which is owned and driven by city partners using the architecture of the partnership board structure as a key vehicle.
- 2.4 The Plymouth Plan is currently built around a city vision to 2034 which is broken down by four key themes:
- Healthy City
 - Growing City
 - International City
 - Regional City (this fourth theme was added when the Joint Local Plan was integrated into the Plymouth Plan).

- 2.5 For each theme, the plan then sets out:
- A Strategic Outcome, to set out at a high level what we want the city to be like in 2034
 - A Strategic Objective, which puts some flesh on how we will seek to achieve this outcome.
 - A series of policies, which identify the key interventions needed.
 - Five ‘measures of success’, as a limited set of metrics to help us know whether or not we are moving in the right direction.
- 2.6 Separate to the Plymouth Plan, but part of the overall systems architecture, are delivery plans which set out specific delivery proposals to implement the plan.
- 2.7 Monitoring of direction of travel in relation to the measures of success has been through a [Plymouth Plan Annual Report](#). This sits alongside more detailed monitoring and review reports, including the [Joint Local Plan Authorities Monitoring Report](#) (produced annually) and the [Plymouth Report](#) (produced every 3 years) which is the core document forming the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

3 How the plan is fairing

- 3.1 The Plymouth Plan is now just over 10 years old and although it has been effective for many years in guiding city plans and strategies and supporting the city’s case for funding and investment, it is important to consider whether or not it continues to deliver what the city needs. This was the basis of a commission given to the Health Determinants Research Collaboration Plymouth (HDRC) in October 2024.
- 3.2 Using ‘Appreciative Enquiry’ as a methodology, HDRC interviewed 18 people across 9 different partnerships in the city, with four main lines of enquiry:
- Whether the plan is still considered a valid aspiration
 - What the levels of awareness are of the plan and its system
 - Whether the plan still meets partner/ship needs
 - To recommend areas to address.
- 3.3 The key findings of HDRC’s work are summarised below:
- Overwhelming support for a plan of this type – an overarching strategy describing the ambition for Plymouth which is a city-wide plan not a council plan.
 - Some good awareness of how the plan is useful, not only in directing delivery, but also in making connections across a wide range of themes, internally to the city and externally to wider country and internationally.
 - Some sectors of the city find that other urgent operational priorities means that its relevance as a guiding document is limited.
 - The impact of COVID, the cost of living crisis, new political landscape and changes in people and organisations means that the plan, its purpose and use, is not embedded as well as it was.
 - Some uncertainty around ownership and relevance within the Council and amongst wider partners.
 - There are some gaps in content created by changes in the context in which we work – e.g. NHS recovery, planning requirements around housing, targets around criminal justice system, responding to the speed of growth of technology.

- There are some gaps that have been exposed, now we have a greater appreciation of the potential impact of some sectors on others, for example, the role of culture in growth, climate change, skills requirements for new sectors.
- The language is somewhat dated.
- Targets for some sectors have changed.
- Some partners are so focussed on daily challenges that it is hard to look up above the parapet.

3.4 Overall, reflecting on the findings of the HDRC work and wider experience from many years of working with the Plymouth Plan, the following conclusions can be reached:

- There remains value in having an overarching strategic plan owned by the city, but it is perhaps too long and complex for ease of use.
- This was a highly ambitious programme which has held together well since the plan's inception, but this has become more difficult over time.
- The original aims remain valid, but the right balance between strategic intent and detailed provision is needed to ensure that it remains effective in achieving these.
- A reformed approach should be considered which:
 - still provides a shared direction overall direction of travel for the city,
 - but which doesn't profess to be what it has proved too difficult to be,
 - is shorter, more practical, accessible and clearer in how it can be used by partners,
 - and is understood to be more than just a plan but a system to support delivery.

3.5 Subsequent conversations with a range of city leaders and partnership board chairs have confirmed that there is a strong appetite for continuing with a plan of the nature of the Plymouth Plan, which partners and boards can own and use, and which provides a strong framework for delivery planning as part of a wider strategic planning system.

4 Towards a plan review and reformation

4.1 There is an alignment of circumstances that point to now being an appropriate time for a full review and reformation of the Plymouth Plan. These include:

- The HDRC research.
- Britain's Ocean City branding work, which was considered by this Panel at its meeting of 15 October 2025.
- Collaborative work amongst a number of city leaders on a new narrative for the city vision for 2050.
- The launch of Team Plymouth and the opportunity of significant defence investment to drive regional growth and prosperity.
- Plymouth city centre's shortlisting as one of 12 new towns nationally.
- The fact that the plan is now over 10 years old and there have been many other changes locally, nationally and globally since.

4.2 A review presents a significant opportunity to ensure that the plan's vision, its strategic outcomes and objectives and its metrics remain meaningful and relevant for the next 10 years, including also addressing any gap areas.

4.3 Additionally, the opportunity also exists to make the plan simpler, easier to use and more agile, by stripping out much detailed content that sits better with delivery plans, including the policies. In this way, the Plymouth Plan will become a higher-level plan that sets a clear

strategic framework and direction of travel and avoids duplication and the risk of inconsistencies with the delivery plans.

5 Embedding play into the Plymouth Plan (Motion on Notice)

- 5.1 At its meeting on 18 September 2023 the City Council considered a Motion on Notice on 'recognising the importance of outdoor play in child development and the need for a city-wide play strategy'. Councillor Lauren McLay introduced the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Poyser. Following contributions from various councillors, the Council agreed amongst other things the following:

'3. Resolved that the opportunity was taken to use the Plymouth Plan Review taking place in 2024 to ensure that play was embedded into the plan and that it then set a framework for a play delivery plan with targeted interventions. This action was to be included in the work programme of the relevant scrutiny committee.'

- 5.2 This matter has not been brought before the Panel until now because a Plymouth Plan review process wasn't under consideration at the time. However, as set out earlier in this report, it is considered that the circumstances are now clearly favour of reviewing the plan.
- 5.3 With regard the current Plymouth Plan, play is addressed primarily through Policy HEA7, which highlights the importance of high quality, health promoting places to play near to where children live and that families are confident to enjoy and explore, whilst also emphasising the role of the natural environment for play. This is also reinforced in Policy GRO6 on Plymouth's natural network. There is no single delivery plan for play, instead play sits within a number of delivery plans particularly relating to green space and the natural environment.
- 5.4 The Plymouth Plan review provides an opportunity to elevate emphasis given to the role of play in the overall city strategy. However, given the nature of the Plymouth Plan this will inevitably be high-level, and the detail will still need to be, as at present, in the relevant delivery plan(s).
- 5.5 We are not yet at the stage of drafting the changes to the Plymouth Plan and so are unable to put forward proposals for this meeting on how play is addressed in the plan. However, as the plan review goes through its process, Members will have the opportunity to consider the draft Plymouth Plan review.

6 Approach and timescales

- 6.1 As a high-level strategic plan, which will ultimately be owned, approved, endorsed and delivered not just by the City Council by partnership boards and stakeholders in the city, it is important that the approach allows for engagement and co-design of the changes to the plan. The City Council has a key role as convener of the process.
- 6.2 Three stages to the review process are anticipated:
1. **Stage One: Raise awareness of the Plymouth Plan and the need for a review.** This is the stage we are currently in and will continue to Spring 2026. It includes conversations within the city, using findings from recent engagement processes (e.g. the City Survey and the 'Big Community Conversation' conducted earlier this year for the Local Government Reorganisation process) and looking at data from review processes, including the Plymouth Plan Annual Report. Consideration is also being

given to the implementation of a campaign, supported and promoted by partners, to help gather a balanced range of perspectives across sectors and communities (the details of this programme are still being developed). In this stage, we will seek to highlight the main issues that the plan review needs to address.

2. **Stage Two: Drafting the review of Plymouth Plan.** This stage is likely to take place during Spring / early Summer 2026. The continuation of conversations with partnerships and stakeholders will be of key importance in helping to co-design the reviewed plan, with a draft plan being published to provide an opportunity to test the content with the city prior to moving to Stage Three.
3. **Stage Three: Approving the reviewed plan.** This stage is likely to occur in late Summer 2026. The final version of the Plymouth Plan review will be brought to a full meeting of City Council for formal adoption, but partnership boards will be invited to endorse the plan, and city partners will be invited to approve it within their organisations.

7 Possible questions for consideration by the Scrutiny Panel

7.1 Questions that the Panel may wish to consider include:

- What are the experiences of Panel members in relation to the Plymouth Plan?
- Does the Panel endorse the idea that the city should continue to have a plan of the nature of the Plymouth Plan?
- Does the Panel feel that this is the right time to conduct a review of the plan?
- Does the Panel have any views on issues that the Plymouth Plan review should address?

ANNEX – THE STRATEGIC OUTCOMES, OBJECTIVES AND METRICS OF THE CURRENT PLYMOUTH PLAN

Healthy City

Strategic Outcome

People in Plymouth live in happy, healthy, safe and aspiring communities, where social, economic and environmental conditions and services enable choices that add quality years to life and reduce the gap in health and wellbeing between communities.

Strategic Objective 1

Delivering a healthy city.

To integrate health and wellbeing, promote choice and personal responsibility, formulate health-enabling local policy and develop good quality local services. This will be achieved by:

1. Delivering solutions and creating environments which address the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and make healthy choices available.
2. Reducing health and wellbeing inequalities and the burden of chronic diseases in the city.
3. Delivering the best health, wellbeing and social outcomes for all people, and reducing and mitigating the impact of poverty, especially child poverty.
4. Helping ensure that children, young people and adults feel safe and confident in their communities, with all people treated with dignity and respect.
5. Building strong and safe communities in good quality neighbourhoods with decent homes for all, health-promoting natural and built environments, community facilities and public spaces and accessible local services, alongside supporting restoration of natural habitats and ecosystems.
6. Enabling people of all ages to play an active role in their community and engage with arts and culture and other activities to promote social cohesion and good mental health and wellbeing.
7. Providing a safe, efficient, accessible and health-enabling transport network which supports freedom of movement and active travel and promotes low carbon lifestyles that are beneficial to physical and mental health.
8. Providing vibrant, effective and modern education settings that enable children and young people to develop as active citizens in the community and enjoy a good quality of life in a dynamic and modern economy, and delivering quality lifelong learning which is available to everyone and can be tailored to quality employment and social opportunities.
9. Ensuring people get the right care from the right people at the right time to improve their health, wellbeing and social outcomes.
10. Making Plymouth a centre of clinical excellence and innovation to benefit the sustainability and growth of the medical and health care sectors in the city and to create education and employment opportunities.

How we will know we have been successful - our measures of success of a healthy city.

- A. People in Plymouth have the best start to life and improved health, increased life expectancy, and a better quality of life, helping to reduce the gap in health inequalities.
- B. More people taking care of themselves.
- C. More residents are contributing to and being involved in their community.
- D. People of Plymouth are well housed, live in good quality, well looked after neighbourhoods where they feel safe and happy.
- E. Good quality and sustainable health and wellbeing services for people who need them, whether they are public services or care in the community.

Growing City

Strategic Outcome

Plymouth has used its economic, social, environmental and cultural strengths to deliver quality and sustainable growth. The city's long term prosperity has been improved, and its economy has been transformed and rebalanced. It has raised its productivity, and provides higher average wages as well as employment opportunities to support a skilled and talented workforce. Its population has grown to nearly 300,000 by 2034.

Strategic Objective 2

Delivering a growing city.

To create the conditions for high quality and sustainable growth, (clean growth) which meets the present and future needs of Plymouth residents and businesses and transforms the city into a prosperous place to live, work and visit, and to empower people to equip themselves with the skills and to find the opportunities to take advantage of that prosperity. This will be achieved by:

1. Building on our industrial strengths to continue to transform and re-balance the economy, building a strong inward investment and export portfolio with a focus on productivity and higher value, knowledge based industries (including marine / marine technology, advanced manufacturing, creative / digital , and the medical/healthcare sector and high value international tourism), alongside supporting the city's valued naval / defence presence.
2. Developing a new and substantial cross-sector strength in businesses addressing, and supporting others to address, the climate emergency.
3. Capitalising on Plymouth as a 'city of makers', using this wealth to drive the creative economy by retaining more creative graduates and attracting makers on a national scale to locate to Plymouth.
4. Managing the city's growth and change, in a way that minimises carbon emissions, is resilient and adaptive to future technological and environmental changes and impacts, and which provides sustainable solutions for development, energy, waste and water catchment management.
5. Creating an environment where businesses can thrive and where the aspiration and talent of the city's population is harnessed and new talent, ideas and innovation attracted to the city.
6. Developing quality jobs and valuable skills, including supporting those who are underemployed or outside of the labour market, allowing everyone to benefit from increased growth and prosperity.
7. Maintaining and enhancing Plymouth's natural networks, providing the green and blue natural spaces needed to support the social and economic wellbeing of Plymouth, recognising its important role in managing climate change and achieving net-zero as well as safeguarding the natural environment for future generations.
8. Delivering a sustainable transport network that supports Plymouth's long term growth while at the same time addressing existing carbon emissions.
9. Delivering a positive and sustainable approach to waste management that optimises its economic and social benefits, whilst minimising adverse environmental impacts.

How we will know we have been successful - our measures of success of a growing city.

- A. The population has grown close to the city's ambition of 300,000.
- B. Plymouth continues to be recognised as a leading Green City.
- C. Plymouth has a vibrant, productive, inclusive and innovative business sector with a workforce that is paid a living wage.
- D. The people of Plymouth have the skills to be school ready and work ready to meet the needs of the city, enabling them to avoid poverty.
- E. Plymouth continues to strengthen the conditions for increased growth, including ensuring effective infrastructure delivery.

International City

Strategic Outcome

Plymouth is internationally renowned as Britain's Ocean City and is the UK's premier marine city, famous for its waterfront and being home to the UK's first National Marine Park. It is recognised as unique among UK cities for its natural drama and for its 500 year old history as a place of embarkation and exploration. Plymouth's continuing journey towards a world leading marine city supports the cultural experiences it offers to visitors who are looking for authenticity and character. The city's world class universities and research institutions are recognised for their innovation, and Plymouth is a place where businesses can capitalise on a unique economic position and talented workforce. Visitors from around the world are welcomed to a city that provides a diverse cultural experience and a perfect base for enjoying the city's surrounds, land and marine. Plymouth is an international city that local communities can enjoy, be a part of and be proud of.

Strategic Objective 3

Delivering the international city.

To enhance Plymouth's profile as an international city where the city projects itself to people who might invest, study or visit the city; to encourage and support Plymouth's businesses to engage in trading terms in an increasingly global market place; and to ensure the city fulfils its potential as a distinctive, dynamic, cultural centre of international renown. This will be achieved by:

1. Driving productivity through support for the growth of internationally significant businesses, including those with sovereign / defence capabilities, attracting new investment into the city (e.g. through establishing a Marine Technology Park at Oceansgate) and encouraging all businesses to expand trading in the global market place.
2. Raising the profile of Plymouth internationally through it's Britain's Ocean City brand and Mayflower 400 in 2020 as a key catalyst and driver, and through the presence of the UK's first National Marine Park.
3. Promoting Plymouth as an internationally competitive tourist destination, with improving road, rail, air and sea and digital connectivity, providing an accessible visitor experience which capitalises on the city's world class waterfront and maritime heritage and natural and built heritage assets, and delivers a long standing economic legacy for the city.
4. Establishing Plymouth as a distinctive, vibrant, cultural city known on the international stage for its rich heritage, creative industries and unparalleled natural setting, having an equally strong appeal for residents, students, visitors and investors.
5. Providing innovative, high quality architectural development to set the city apart and create an attractive, forward looking environment.
6. Providing a full range of hotel and visitor accommodation, including new high quality provision, to ensure that there is adequate accommodation capacity for all visitors.
7. Recognising Plymouth internationally as a leading green city that has made exemplary progress on addressing its carbon footprint.
8. Further developing our universities, research institutions and knowledge based industries which are widely known for their innovation and world class assets.
9. Delivering a strong, diverse and dynamic city that welcomes new residents, students and visitors and that celebrates cultural diversity.

How we will know we have been successful - our measures of success of an international city.

- A. Plymouth continues to improve its diverse cultural and sporting experience with great venues, major events, good food and hospitality offer.
- B. Plymouth is internationally renowned as a leading UK tourist destination.
- C. Plymouth is recognised internationally for expertise in marine science and high technology manufacturing.
- D. Plymouth's reputation for world class universities and research institutions continues to grow.
- E. Plymouth's reputation is strengthened as a welcoming, multicultural city where a broad range of partners promote the benefits of diversity.