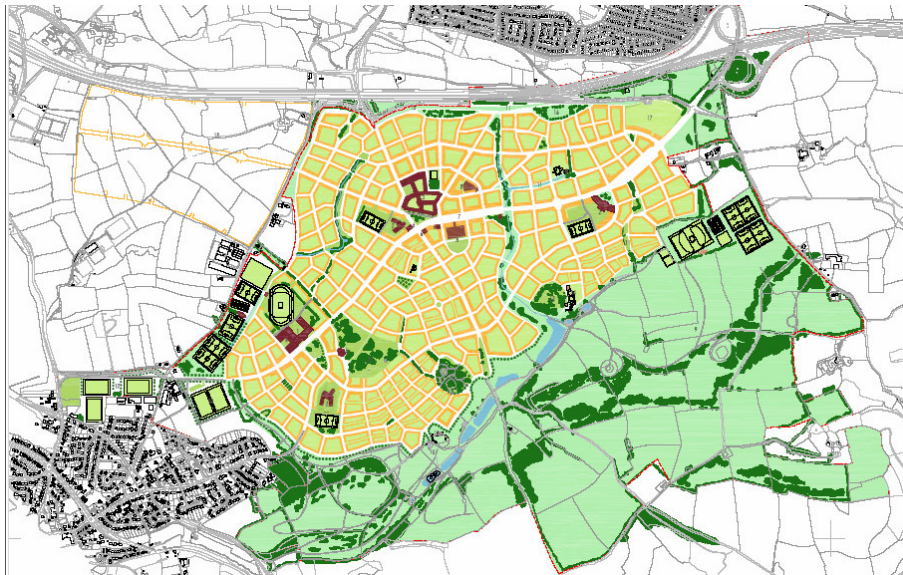


# Sherford Young Peoples' Planning Day



19<sup>th</sup> April 2006  
Ivybridge Youth Centre



## *Executive Summary*

As part of the process of developing the Sherford New Community in a manner which challenges the conventional approach to development, and ensures it becomes an exemplar sustainable community, Devon County Council initiated a Young Persons Planning Day. The aim of the Young Persons Day was to engage young people from the local communities around the Sherford Valley in the designs for the New Community and in particular those spaces which they had the greatest interest in (e.g. Youth Centre, Community Park). The day was used by the developer to gain young people's ideas on how Sherford should be developed, the facilities and services it should provide and how they should be tailored to meet the needs of young people and how young people would wish to be involved in its planning, design, governance, management and delivery. The day produced some excellent, highly innovative ideas which the developer of Sherford was delighted to incorporate in the masterplan and detailed designs for the new community where possible. It is now critical that the results of the day are fed back to the young people and other interested parties, and that they are given an explanation as to the tangible impact their views have had on the New Community. This report is the next stage of that process in terms of informing young people about the influence their views have had and how they will be involved in the future planning of Sherford.

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## 1. Introduction

The Sherford New Community is located 4 miles to the east of Plymouth between the A38 trunk road and the A379, on a large greenfield site in the Sherford Valley. The New Community is an adopted Devon Structure Plan proposal (Proposal ST8) and is set to deliver at least 4000 dwellings by 2016 and 5,500 dwellings by 2021, acting as an urban extension of the city of Plymouth. It is being planned to be an exemplar sustainable community based on the principles of ‘new urbanism’ and ‘walkable neighbourhoods’ and exhibiting best practice in sustainability. The company set up to deliver Sherford (‘Red Tree’), are planning to submit an outline planning application for a new community of 5,500 dwellings in the Sherford Valley and a detailed planning application for the Main Street in Autumn 2006. This will include a ‘Town Plan’ for the new community that has been developed by The Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment in consultation with numerous groups, agencies, organisations and authorities.

The approach adopted at Sherford has been one of strong partnership working between the developer, South Hams District Council, Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council and the local communities. This is particularly important at Sherford because of its cross-boundary location and the need for cross-boundary infrastructure provision. As part of engaging all sectors of the community in the planning of Sherford, Devon County Council’s Principal Youth Officer proposed a Young Peoples Planning Day. This would be a day in which local young people could have their voices heard about aspects of the town that were particularly relevant to them. The approach closely ties in with Devon County Council’s Strategy for Youth Empowerment (‘Bigger Voices...Better World!’) and its commitment to achieving the advanced level of Hear by Right<sup>1</sup> by 2008 and Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Hear by Right is a tried and tested standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. The standards framework in Hear by Right relies on self-assessment, divided into three levels of ‘emerging’, ‘established’ and ‘advanced’, with each level building on the last.

<sup>2</sup> *“Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account”*

## 2. The Sherford Young Peoples Planning Day

### 2.1 Programme of Events

The Sherford Young Peoples Planning Day, held on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Ivybridge Youth Centre, was a multi agency event working across Council boundaries. The day was planned and delivered by the Devon Youth Service Youth Participation Team with support from the Youth Participation Worker in Plymouth City Council's Youth Service and assistance from planners and consultants from Red Tree, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council (see Section 6.1). Over 20 young people attended the event from a variety of areas, including Plymouth, Ivybridge and the South Hams.

The programme included an overview of the project through the use of a video from an ITV Special Report on 'New Towns in the South West', and a talk by Red Tree's Landscape Consultant on the provisions for young people at Sherford. This was followed by a visit to the site to look at the setting for the 'town plan'. The site visit was followed by a series of workshops set up by the Devon Youth Service Youth Participation Team to look at different aspects of the development (e.g. Community Park, Youth Centre). Each workshop had a small selection of young people, a planning officer or consultant and a youth worker to look at certain spaces in more detail and to give the young people an opportunity to design 'their' quarry area, youth centre and community park. Throughout these sessions questions were asked about what the young people already knew about Sherford, what they thought about the current designs for the town, what they would want in a new town and how they would want to be involved in the town's governance and management.

Figure 1: Site Visit



Figure 2: Workshops



## **2.2 Review of the Day**

The Young Peoples Planning Day was a highly successful event, not least because of the range of skills that were brought together from the professionals involved. The youth workers were able to ensure that the processes were young people friendly and therefore that young people were safe and able to engage with the activities, the planners were able to bring depth and understanding to the project and the landscape architect was able to draw the proposed youth centre as the young people talked through their ideas, making the whole concept come alive. Visiting the site of the new community was critical in raising the young people's interests in Sherford and a reminder of the immense opportunity such a scale of development represents.

## **2.3 The Next Stage**

The next stage was for the developer to put into writing how they planned to use the feedback from the event to have a tangible impact on the Sherford New Community – an 'implementation framework'. The young people will be given feedback both verbally and in writing from the developer on how their views have made a difference to the final outcome. The next page shows the key findings from the event established by Devon County Council's Youth Service and its Planning and Transportation Group, followed by a review of the day by the developer and some clear actions from the developer as to how they will use the ideas generated to influence the masterplanning, planning application and strategy development for the Sherford New Community.

## **2.4 Key Findings**

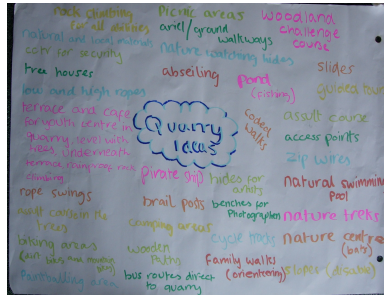
### **General Points**

- a) Young people did not previously feel very engaged and often knew little about Sherford
- b) Main concern was young people's lack of influence so far on the provision of facilities designed for them. For example, they particularly mentioned that they would want to design their own skate park.
- c) Young people would like their own 'graffiti wall' that they can design
- d) Local schools should have competitions to help design key spaces in Sherford.
- e) Young people were keen that Sherford's facilities would be open to the surrounding communities for their use, cheap to use and/or free and have excellent public transport and cycling links.
- f) Young people suggested the establishment of a Youth Panel for Sherford and their continuing involvement in Sherford

- g) Ownership - if young people are part of the process they will ensure others don't damage what is there and that is a successful, sustainable community.

### Activities in the Quarry

- A natural lake
- Family walks and orienteering
- Rock climbing and abseiling
- Tree houses
- Areas for camping
- Ponds and fishing
- An outdoor cinema and amphitheatre



### Activities in the Community Park

- An indoor skate park that accommodates all skaters
- A community farm
- A bandstand and concert area
- An 'anything goes' area which has no designated purpose and would be available to music festivals, travelling fairs, circuses etc.
- Sports pitches, changing rooms and an astroturf
- Nature trails, a picnic area, food stands and a café
- A fishing lake and duck pond
- An assault course
- A shooting range/paintballing course
- High-rise adventure activities
- Mountain biking course designed with the involvement of young people

### Ideas for the Youth Centre

- A star-shaped youth centre with each point having a different room
- A basement and a balcony
- A café area, music room and games room
- Emergency accommodation
- A BBQ and picnic benches on a terrace
- Allotments and gardens



### 3. The Developer's Views on the Sherford Young Peoples' Planning Day

Community planning days are rarely undertaken with enthusiasm by developers. The process itself is alien to them, but most importantly the impacts on cost and timetable are seen as compromising. It is much easier for developers to consider themselves specialists & experts and to make their plans behind closed doors ready for an application that will only be made available for wider scrutiny and comment when it is its final form when there is little chance of meaningful change. The government has recognised that this is not an effective way to engage people in the process and have developed a process (The Local Development Framework, superceding the Local Plan process) where proposals for development have to be much more openly discussed prior to an application being made. Red Tree agree absolutely with this approach and have engaged, from the outset and with the support of The Prince's Foundation, in a process of "Enquiry by Design" despite the time and cost implications. There is no better way to express the reasons for doing this than by reference to the Youth Workshop undertaken here. The facilities and arrangements made for the youth of Sherford and its surrounding communities must be generated in major part by the people most able to reflect their needs and desires – the youth of Devon.

Additionally these open workshops are always viewed with some trepidation by developers because of the unknowns, for example:

Who is going to attend?

How many people?

What age?

What are they going to require?

Will they enjoy the event?

Will there be enough to do?

Will they have any ideas for the new community?

The exciting part of entering into this Young Peoples' Planning Day was finding out how the scheme might improve as a consequence of the event. With this in mind, it was important that we entered into the day with an open mind.

The day was therefore organised by the Devon Youth Service and we were invited to attend and notified what to bring (drawings, videos, etc) to help inform the debate. It was particularly encouraging to see how many young people turned up to take part in the day, especially as it was during a school holiday!

The morning session involved some short presentations by the design team and the organisers in order to provide the background to the project. This was followed by a short visit to the site to have a look at the disused Quarry and the proposed Community Park area, which gave the group a far better understanding of the scheme having seen the site ‘in the flesh’.

The real dialogue started after a very good lunch when the Youth Participation Workers divided us into groups to look at specific site areas and to start to generate ideas on how to design the spaces and what to incorporate into them. The ideas generated were diverse, exciting, some were wacky and ‘off the wall’, but many were ideas that could quite easily be incorporated into the design of the Town. These included the following:

### **Quarry Area**

- Adventure Park including:
- Family walks
  - Climbing wall
  - Rope bridges, tree houses and aerial activities (subject to H&S)
  - Picnic areas
  - Wildlife hides
  - Board walks

### **Community Park, including passive and active uses**

- Active:
- skate park (indoor to be explored as an option, to be designed in collaboration with young people)
  - Sports pitches & all-weather multi use games areas
  - Assault course/ trim trail
  - Bike trail/ extreme bike course
- Passive:
- Community Farm
  - Events area for music, fairs, circus

- 1 Youth Centre: Provide a building with multiple rooms off a central gathering space to allow for a café, music room, games room etc.
- A BBQ area and external terrace
  - Graffiti Wall
  - Garden area for sitting & relaxing
  - Outdoor sports area for 5-a –side football, basketball, netball etc
  - Cycle & car parking
  - Security & youth services

This is not to say that the list is exhaustive and we are sure that further ideas will be generated as the Town Plan develops, which leads us onto the Framework for action in the next section.

Before the next section, we would like to thank the Devon Youth Services for providing a well organised, good fun, enjoyable and pro-active day both for ourselves as the client team and the young people who attended. Most importantly, a big thank you from Red Tree to the young people of Devon who attended and we look forward to your continuing involvement throughout the development.

#### 4. A Framework for Action Proposals for Incorporating Young People's Views in the Planning, Design and Delivery of the Sherford New Community

Following the planning day, it is important that there is a mechanism to ensure that there is a continued dialogue with the young people in order to listen and incorporate as many of their ideas as possible.

Certainly, the starting point is to ensure that the ideas generated to date are, where possible, included in the Outline Planning Application and then into the detailed design stages. These ideas will therefore feature in the various strategies that are currently being developed, particularly the Public Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy, and also the Town Design Code.

In terms of future inputs, the detail design stages for the sports and recreation areas, will include further dialogue with the young people, to ensure that we have incorporated their detailed ideas and more importantly to encourage the existing communities to have a sense of ownership of the New Community.

Proposals and a suggested timetable for further liaison are as follows:

- Provide a copy of this report to each young person who attended and make it available on a website – Summer 2006;
- Circulate the relevant parts of the Outline Planning Application to each young person who attended – Autumn 2006;
- Set up a similar young people's planning day to look at detailed designs, following the receipt of planning permission – Summer 2007;
- Work with other partners in getting local schools involved in the designs of those elements of interest to them;
- Invite young people to archive their memories of the area;
- Establish a youth panel to meet regularly to discuss the Sherford proposals with the developer and LPAs when development begins – likely 2008; and
- Encourage the youth panel to get involved in the Community Trust when appropriate.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, the Sherford Young Peoples' Planning Day showed the critical importance of engaging young people at an early stage in planning for major strategic developments, to ensure they feel 'ownership' to the outcomes. Young people wanted to be involved in the development of Sherford and its governance and management. In particular in ensuring the facilities provided for young people will be a success both now and in the future, especially those that they feel are critical to their quality of life - the community park activities and the youth centre.

The enthusiasm raised on this day, particularly in the afternoon workshops and on the site visit now needs to be maintained and consolidated. This will require a series of jointly agreed actions to be implemented to ensure children and young people are central partners in the future development of Sherford. It is important that we involve young people at all stages of planning for Sherford, treating them as young adults with their own independent minds, recognising that they will be critical to Sherford's success as a sustainable community and a place where people choose to live, work, play and visit for decades to come. The Young Peoples' Planning Day has started the process of empowering young people in decisions regarding Sherford. We must now strive to rise up the ladder of young people involvement at Sherford (see Section 6.2), from consulting and informing young people to them initiating decisions and sharing decisions made by adults.

Gareth Bradford

Strategic Implementation Officer, Devon County Council

16<sup>th</sup> June 2006

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 List of Attendees at Sherford Young Peoples Planning Day

| <i>Name</i>      | <i>Which organisation</i> | <i>Designation</i>                     |
|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Rahila Henderson | Devon Youth Service       | Youth Participation Worker             |
| Zaena Barnard    | Devon Youth Service       | Youth Participation Worker             |
| Verity Heffer    | Devon Youth Service       | Youth Participation Worker             |
| Gareth Bradford  | Devon County Council      | Planning                               |
| Alison Salt      | Ivybridge Youth Centre    | MV/delivering youth work               |
| Rebecca Sturge   | Red Tree                  | Project Manager and Environmentalist   |
| James Koe        | Red Tree                  | Partner                                |
| Nicholas Tubbs   | Red Tree                  | Partner                                |
| Martyn Lonsdale  | Consultant to Red Tree    | Landscape Architect and Urban Designer |
| Rebecca Mosley   | SHDC                      | Project Planner                        |
| Mark Harris      | SHDC                      | Urban Designer                         |
| Ross Kennerley   | SHDC                      | Tree and Wildlife Officer              |

6.2 Eight levels of Children & Young People's Participation

