



Meeting note

Visioning event
Plymouth Urban Fringe Development Plan Document (DPD).

Friday 25th September 2009
Elfordleigh Hotel, Plympton

Attendees

Mike Palmer	Plymouth City Council
Hannah Dempsey	Plymouth City Council
John Salvatore	Plymouth City Council
Alistair Macpherson	Plymouth City Council
Sunita Mills	Plymouth City Council
Sharon Sheppard	Plymouth City Council
Dave Taylor	Plymouth City Council
Claire Mitcham	Baker Associates
Mark Russell	Baker Associates
Jon Sharpe	Devon County Council
Joe Keech	Devon County Council
Cllr Ian Blackler	South Hams District Council
Moira Andrews	Devon County Council
Cllr B Cane	Brixton Parish Council
Robin Hogg	Chairman CPRE Plymouth & SH
Cllr Walsh	Ermington Parish Council
Phil Chivers	Devon County Police, South Hams
Cllr Phil Dredge	Ivybridge Parish Council
Darrell Clegg	Library Service PCC
Emma Dixon	GVA Grimley representing Highways Agency
Ross Kennerley	South Hams
Simon Dunsford	Natural England
Ben Philipps	Forestry Commission
Liz Hitchins	Brixton Parish Council
James Carter	Co-operative Estates
Cllr Keith Baldry	South Hams
Debbie Holloway	South Hams

George Marshall
Kathryn Deeney

David Lillington
Carol Trant

Devon County Council
Plymouth City Council/Natural
England
Dartmoor National Park
South Hams District Council

Scope and purpose

The countryside beyond the edge of the Plymouth provides not just a physical setting for the city, but a resource for both city and country dwellers alike. Its varied roles mean that it can be a place of competing demands and uses both now and for the future. The Urban Fringe DPD will sit alongside other plans and strategies for the area, and help to manage the area over the next 20 years. The purpose of the visioning event was to explore in more detail the issues that characterise the urban fringe, to understand opportunities for the future, and to begin to set priorities that will be taken forward as part of the planning process. More specifically we sought to explore:

- What does the urban fringe mean to people, what activities and uses take place there, and are there any tensions between different uses?
- What are the characteristics of settlements within and on the edge of the urban fringe, how can the urban fringe accommodate development, both now and in the future, and what is the relationship between settlements and countryside?
- What area should the DPD cover, what will its role be in managing future development, and how will it relate to other spatial and management plans?

Introduction

An introduction to the topic of the day was provided by John Baker, Baker Associates Planning Consultants. He noted that the urban fringe is an area characterised by its status as being in-between both city and country. It includes an area of urban edge and an area of countryside beyond. Uses seeking a peripheral city location characterise the urban edge, and the influence of the city is clearly visible in the rural areas beyond. The fringe performs a number of roles, and provides the nearest natural space for city dwellers. Settlements within the urban fringe have a strong relationship with the city, and as cities grow at the edges, there is an impact on the urban fringe and the smaller settlements within it. The urban fringe is subject to pressures and competing demands as a result of its different roles.

The urban fringe DPD would need to plan positively for this area, in a way which had not been done before. It would be a spatial plan, but could also have a role as an implementation plan, and a management plan. It would be a cross-boundary plan between Plymouth City, South Hams District, and Devon County, and would be an inclusive plan. It would have a relationship to Local Development Frameworks in Plymouth and South Hams, as well as a range of other plans and strategies.

The remainder of the day took the form of a series of workshops focussing on different aspects of the urban fringe, and considering the scope of the DPD.

Workshop 1: What's the use of the urban fringe?

1. uses and activities within the urban fringe area

The 'urban' parts of the fringe area include retail parks, the airport, port, supermarkets, hospitals and schools as well as housing. The rural parts include recreational uses (tourism and sport), industrial uses (including employment units, energy production, waster management), transport links and nodes (including green routes and P&R), forestry and agricultural uses (including smallholdings, food production, garden centres and horsiculture), Wildlife corridors, settlements, defence uses, and cemeteries. It should be noted that the sea and estuaries form part of the urban fringe, and marine uses include fishing, dredging, sailing and the ferry.

It was noted that some of these activities were specific to the urban fringe, whilst others also occurred frequently within the city or countryside proper.

2. The role of the urban fringe area in the relationship between the city and country

The urban fringe area has an important role as a buffer between urban and rural areas, and this is a symbiotic relationship. The fringe provides different things for rural and for urban dwellers. As a buffer zone it provides a transition area between city and countryside, both in terms of movement and in terms of views, and protects more sensitive countryside beyond from an intrusion of urban uses. It acts as a gateway to the city, giving a first impression and defining the setting of the city. It provides the means of linking rural dwellers with city jobs, and city dwellers with countryside recreation opportunities, often using green infrastructure linkages. It actually includes both a rural edge and an urban edge.

In addition, the urban fringe represents space for city dwellers, and this, together with the recreational and educational opportunities it affords, has an impact on the health and well-being of city dwellers.

The fringe also 'enables' the growth of the city in that it provides a sustainable location for housing need generated within the city, which cannot be accommodated there. Housing on the edge of the city can be extremely attractive to urban dwellers as it offers the 'best of both worlds'. This in turn creates a tension between the need to expand, and existing urban fringe uses, especially nearby villages.

The question was asked: how much does Plymouth need to step over its boundary in terms of what it needs to support the city? This has implications for the use of the urban fringe in terms of for example local production of energy and food, building materials and water management. There are currently 5 sites around Plymouth being considered for energy generation, and decisions on these will impact upon other decision in the urban fringe.

Some considered that the name urban fringe gives a negative feeling, should it be referred to as the urban / rural fringe? Or even country edge?

3. Are there any locations which are particularly important – if so why?

Transport corridors, and in particular the A38 corridor were seen to be particularly important in the fringe, as fringe type activities around these were particularly intense, and there are a number of existing and planned fringe communities and employment areas within this corridor such as Langage and Sherford. Lee Mill quarry was also seen as particularly important, as it may become an energy from waste plant in the future. Areas with landscape designations such as Dartmoor National Park and the AoNB's, as well as areas with value for tourism and recreation (including estuaries).

Workshop 2: Settlements and the urban fringe

1. The immediate relationship of the settlements with their surrounding countryside

Relationships with the countryside tend to be different for different types of settlements, and indeed for different people within those settlements. Smaller settlements, and some of their inhabitants seem to have a more functional relationship with the countryside, working on the land for example. Settlements such as Sparkwell and Cornwood are also strongly influenced in environmental and employment terms by historic and current industrial uses, including those at the Langage industrial estate, and from mining operations. Access to larger settlements and the city for these dwellers is more difficult without a car. Larger settlements tend to have a stronger role as city dormitories, and a stronger local centre role, and the relationship of their residents with the countryside is more about well-being, views and quality of life. There are apparently an increasing number of small holdings that are no longer being actively farmed, and their new residents tend to have a stronger relationship with the city.

In terms of the relationship of the city with its surrounding area, the 'pull' along the A386 was described as very strong up as far as Tavistock, and fairly strong as far as the A30.

2. The purpose of development in the urban fringe, and the types of places it should be directed to

The consensus was that development should seek to enhance places and provide for their need in terms of employment, services, affordable housing, or open market housing to support new or existing services. The aim should be to achieve communities that are more self sustaining. The comment was made that it should not be seen just in terms of extending city boundaries.

It was also noted that development should support the wide range of functions that the urban fringe provides, including protecting existing greenspace and landscapes / seascapes.

In design terms it was noted that new development could enhance the city's gateways to provide a more welcoming entrance to the city. There are also opportunities within the urban edge to correct past design mistakes and repair the urban fabric. Equally, new development could be used to improve access to the countryside for city dwellers.

3. Criteria for determining where development goes in the future?

There was a strong consensus that the criteria for decisions about the location of new development should be based on various sustainability criteria, including in particular, the importance of responding to identified needs within existing communities including those expressed by communities themselves for example through parish plans.

Other key criteria included:

- Transport and infrastructure provision being available
- Opportunities to improve the critical mass needed to support existing or desired services within settlements
- Affordable housing need
- Respecting landscape sensitivities and built environment character
- Development should be appropriate for the size of the community
- It should benefit local people and have wider benefits
- Any larger scale development should be closer to the city with stronger links
- Development should be of high quality in terms of design and environmental sustainability

The need for development is an important concept, especially in relation to housing. Individual settlements have their own needs, whilst other needs are 'exported' by the city, and sometimes the difference between the two is unclear, for example when village residents have strong links to the city.

Workshop 3: The scope of the DPD

1. The area to be covered by the plan.

Discussion focused on the need to cover a wider area in order to define the relationships between the city and the urban fringe area, and a tighter boundary in terms of taking forward spatial thinking to identify site allocations.

The DPD would need to describe the relationship between Plymouth and the urban fringe, including the neighbouring areas of all local authorities including Cornwall, and including coastal and marine areas as well as land. It was recognised that the plan might cover different areas depending on which different function was being considered. This wider area would be based on evidence-based studies, and would link to the wider sub-regional agenda.

The tighter boundary should be drawn inside settlements that are subject to Allocations DPD's for other authorities, thus avoiding any conflict with other plans.

The need to consider the city and its hinterland together was emphasised, rather than one before the other.

2. The untapped potential of the urban fringe for existing communities

There was considered to be potential in the following areas:

- Tourism and recreation potential associated with landscape, marine and historic assets, in particular using green corridors to link the city and fringe along the

Plym and Tamar valleys, the need to identify 'honey pots' close to the city, and the role of estuaries in recreational transport

- The role of green / marine corridors in linking rural communities to the city (a two-way relationship)
- Potential for renewable energy generation
- Housing potential at Plymton, Plymstock, Woolwell and Tamerton
- Potential release of MOD land
- An examination of the way in which Plymouth can support the economies of neighbouring rural communities – e.g. through food co-ops and temporary uses for unused land
- Potential to enhance gateways into the city
- The opportunities to set the parameters of development for the future, in particular by identifying a long term Green Infrastructure resource and potential city boundary for the future.

3. Ensuring that decisions about the future are not merely development led

There was a consensus that decisions needed to be taken using a partnership approach, including meaningful community engagement, and a sound evidence base. Part of the wider approach to planning in the sub-region should be about developing a shared understanding of the new agenda involving Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's).

Development should respond to identified needs within communities. It should also be seen as a tool to deliver wider community benefits (e.g. using 106 or similar mechanisms).

The vision for the future should be about much more than development proposals. The location of recreation, energy generation and other infrastructure is as important as housing proposals.

The plan should include both a longer term vision for change, and short term aspirations that can be achieved now.

4. The priorities for the plan

Identified priorities included:

- Protection of both natural environment and the culture and character of different areas – the plan should respond to its context in this sense
- The need to explore how the city relates to surrounding settlements, including functional relationships
- Managing open spaces and Green Infrastructure
- Meeting needs (e.g. for affordable housing or community facilities), supporting settlements to be more viable and improving the local economy
- The need to deliver growth in a socially, environmental and economically sustainable way
- Focus development on accessible transport corridors
- Exploiting assets such as minerals, energy, farmland
- Ensuring that proposals are deliverable and realistic

- Balance the need for the urban fringe to fulfil its intrinsic functions, with the requirement to accommodate an expanding city, retaining the identity of both city and nearby communities
- The need to consider the relationship with coast and rivers

5. The fit with other emerging plans and strategies

Other strategies and plans include:

Development plans

South Hams LDF
 Plymouth City LDF
 Dartmoor National Park LDF
 Cornwall Council LDF
 Regional Spatial Strategy
 Waste management plans

Other Local authority plans and strategies

Local Transport Plan
 Economic Development Plans
 Community strategy
 Green Infrastructure delivery plan
 Biodiversity action plans
 Estuary management plans
 Plan for Sherford
 Port study
 Access and recreation strategies

Plans and strategies of other organisations

Dartmoor National Park management plan
 AoNB management plans
 Parish plans
 National Trust Plans
 Forestry Commission plans
 Village Design Statements
 Plymouth woodlands management plan
 Agricultural support initiatives
 Affordable Housing Protocols

Conclusion

Following the workshop discussions, John Baker gave a brief summary of some of the key points emerging from the day, noting the need to consider both urban and rural parts of the urban fringe together; considering the mutual relationship of the city and its hinterland. It would be important that no one single element, such as infrastructure, or housing allocations should drive the plan, and it would need some innovative ideas in terms of spatial planning.

Work would continue following the meeting with Plymouth City, South Hams, Cornwall Councils and other stakeholders. It was also anticipated that there would continue to be a stakeholder group supporting the process, including people who had attended the visioning event. Formal consultation on the draft plan would take place in the spring of 2010.