THE PLAN
This is a cunning plan to kick-start the Future High Street through a big capital project that puts feet on the ground and bums on seats and makes space for a growing community of city dwellers and city builders. A project that restores civic confidence and acts as an incubator for the pioneering, industrious and creative people that will populate the Future High Street.

**THE PLAN IS SIMPLE:**

1. **RESTORE THE CIVIC CENTRE AS A SYMBOL OF RENEWED CIVIC CONFIDENCE**

2. **INTRODUCE HIGH IMPACT USES WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUE**

3. **BUILD A HIGH FOOTFALL EVENTS ECONOMY AROUND THE REFURBISHED GUILDHALL AND CIVIC**

4. **FILL CIVIC WITH PIONEERING, INDUSTRIOUS & CREATIVE PEOPLE**

5. **KICK-START A LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE ‘FUTURE HIGH STREET’**

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1. Good work has been done across the City Centre, but the empty Civic building weighs heavily on civic and commercial confidence.

2. A makeover is not enough, the Civic must be filled with high value uses that add to the wider City Centre offer.

3. We can create a combined offer with a refurbished Guildhall that brings more people, for more reasons, more of the time.

4. With a city incubator that is a hothouse for city builders, activists, entrepreneurs and future high street pioneers.

5. That will kick-start a locally distinctive future high street, made in Plymouth for all the people of Plymouth.
A. Restore the Civic Centre

At the centre of Plymouth’s post-war Abercrombie plan the Civic Centre was a modernist icon and civic statement. To some it’s a modernist icon to others it’s an eyesore, but everyone agrees something has to be done. This plan will refurbish the rundown Grade II listed building, introducing a truly innovative and flexible residential model that will bring pioneering people of all ages to live in the city centre. It will create high value uses with economic and social value and footfall that will in turn support retail and hospitality.

B. Reanimate the Civic Square

At the junction of the two primary axes of the Abercrombie plan Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe’s Civic Square is both a main route and a destination. By actively programming the public realm we can help to deliver a ‘sticky’ city, with more to offer locals and visitors. This plan will build on the Better Places Framework Phase I: Armada Way South initiative. It will create permeability and street level animation within the Civic Centre and create a combined and curated offer along the Royal Parade ‘south bank’ between Guildhall and Theatre Royal.

C. Upgrade the Guildhall

The Grade II Listed Plymouth Guildhall is one of the few survivors from the pre-war city centre, heavily bomb damaged and restored as part of the post-war plan. This contains to be an important building and to provide a civic space for events and ceremonies. This plan will bring the Guildhall up to the rising standards now required for high footfall events. By bringing this forward as part of a suite of facilities and spaces we can ensure that we deliver the maximum range and flexibility and enhanced capacity across the Guildhall, Civic and wider city events and conference offer.

D. Reactivate Royal Parade

This wide tree lined avenue is lined with inactive frontages to the south, making this generous public space a unengaging transitional space, lacking the animation needed to hold people and invite exploration. This plan will join up the Royal Theatre, Civic and Guildhall in an animated strip offering culture, leisure and conference uses along a pedestrianised ‘south bank’. By reactivating this strip we help rebalance the one-sided street and create better conditions for existing and future high street uses facing the Civic Centre and Royal Theatre across Royal Parade.

E. Kick-start the Future High Street

The Future High Street is not a single street or a set location, it is the change across the city centre from a retail only offer to a more diverse and locally distinctive offer. It is a response to challenges brought on by global trends in online shopping and a move towards experiential spending. The answer is greater diversity, a more mixed economy on the high street that serves more people in more ways. By making the city centre a more inclusive and distinctive place the high street business whether it is a ‘high street name’ or a small independent. And with more on offer there will be more feet on the ground and more bums on seats.
1 — RESTORE THE CIVIC CENTRE AS A SYMBOL OF RENEWED CIVIC CONFIDENCE

RESTORED. REINVENTED. REACTIVATED. REINHABITED.

Restored
Restoration of this Grade II Listed monument is of both civic and cultural importance with the renotation of its function as the international centrepiece of the post-war Abercrombie Plan. In their proposals Gillespie Yunnie Architects give priority to expressing the strong rational composition of the original design by Jellicoe, Balston & Caine. Faithful restoration is brought into sharper focus by intelligent additions that are thoroughly modern while recapturing the spirit of the original.

Reinvented
The key to creative conservation is to understand how listed buildings can be given new purpose while preserving the significant qualities that underpin their architectural significance. Restoration is never enough. In reopening to the public they must be at once new and old, as much of the present as of the period, unapologetically future facing and enthusiastically revealing their past. To bring a building back to life we must first find the key to reconnecting it to the life of the modern city.

Reactivated
In a building so visible and pivotal to its city centre location what happens here has significance for the city centre overall. The proposal has to make this building count, to make it’s presence felt pro-actively, making an essential contribution to the wider city centre renaissance. Reactivating the Civic Centre means a building fit for purpose and able to express its new purpose at street level. We need the life of the building to bring life to the surrounding streets and to help breath new life into the future high street.

Reinhabited
Plymouth has a lower density of city centre residential than most other UK cities. The absence of new neighbourhoods supported by urban dwellers adds to the challenge addressing the decline of the high street. Put simply a permanent community helps to underpin new and existing local businesses. And our residential proposal is all about community, a radical new housing model that mixes flexible living with communal spirit and home-working. A future housing model to support the Future High Street.

Images this page
Precedent images for civic space from Gillespie Yunnie Architects which much loved winning architecture at Royal William Yard (column three) have helped to establish this as a major tourist, leisure and cultural destination.
2 — INTRODUCE HIGH IMPACT USES WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUE

Gainful employment
When good quality jobs are less likely to be linked to geography, natural resource or physical infrastructure, how does a city compete? This is about the whole city as a proposition. Furthermore, a great city to live and work. A city where people want to start-up or settle down. A city where local people can see a future and graduates want to stick around. We need to add value to the city offer with high quality modern workspace, supporting gainful employment, that will play a starring role on the mixed use future high street.

Popular culture
A big part of the City’s proposition are the things we do together in public, whether it’s niche or mainstream, a good cup of coffee, a favourite restaurant, a place to hear music, see art or talk nonsense. In the cultural life of a city, a legendary food stall is up there with a world class music venue and we need to support culture at every level so that city life joins up to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Our proposals for Civic and Guildhall look to fill gaps in the cultural offer so that the citywide story is of good times had by all.

Big ideas
Through conferencing, co-working and incubation space and by working with the University we aim to make Civic and Plymouth a leading destination for ideas. And ideas like people have a habit of hanging around, being curious and making things happen. More than ever ideas are the currency of a thriving modern city.

Digital Hub
In the digital age where you work is about connectivity, superfast broadband of course, but also connections with useful, interesting or inspiring people. Our desk can be anywhere, we can choose where we sit and who we sit near, in this world the workplace is as much a lifestyle choice as a business decision - it’s about who we are as much as where we are. In a digital age a successful workspace is a great working habitat for humans first and a great place for laptops as standard.

Urban Splash own and manage over 1 million square feet of commercial space across the country. They specialise in bringing high value creative, cultural hospitality and independent retail for the transformative impact it brings to mixed use urban regeneration.
3 — BUILD A HIGH FOOTFALL EVENTS ECONOMY AROUND THE REFURBISHED GUILDHALL AND CIVIC

BUMS ON SEATS. FEET ON THE GROUND. HANDS IN THE AIR. HEAD IN THE CLOUDS.

BUMS ON SEATS

For the hospitality, leisure and entertainment sector there’s only one metric that really counts, bums on seats, the rest is fluff and nonsense. We can get intentional bums on seats or incidental bums on seats, bums can come from near or far, by one or by the coach load. But the real trick is to sit every bum on as many seats as possible, a seat at the theatre, a seat at the table, a chair in the lounge, a stool at the bar, a bench in the park. Our proposal needs to add to the wider visitor offer because total bums on seats is all about joined up thinking.

FEET ON THE GROUND

Before bums on seats we need feet on the ground. City centre footfall has fallen by 21% in the last five years, retailers are facing an uphill struggle, more of the same isn’t the answer. We need a more diverse high street with more reasons for more people to come more of the time. With 30,000 extra visitors a year to the proposed University of Plymouth conference facility alone we plan to make a big difference, on the ground, where it matters.

HANDS IN THE AIR

We want this proposal to be an open invitation for all visitors and all the people of Plymouth. Through encouraging participation in all its forms we can make this proposal truly inclusive. Whether it’s a show of hands in the big debate or hands in the air at the music event of the year we want people to join in. We need a clear purpose behind our plan and lots of fun along the way.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Our public spaces, both indoors and out, need to be fit for purpose, the viability of our plan depends on how thorough and grounded our proposals are. But it’s not enough to be fit for purpose. This plan serves a civic purpose, it is about growing civic optimism and facing the future, it is a catalyst for the continuing renaissance of the city centre. So at every turn our spaces should be inspirational and aspirational, they should encourage us to think big and dream big.
4 — FILL CIVIC WITH PIONEERING, INDUSTRIOUS & CREATIVE PEOPLE

Local heroes
By nurturing local talent and supporting local enterprise we create the conditions where people can make a difference. Local heroes are the people who will make a positive impact on where they live and work and on those around them. We don't know who they are yet, they don't know who they are yet, they may be Plymothians born and bred, people who just got here or people who never left. But through the proactive planning of building uses and activity programmes we can make sure that there are plenty of local opportunities to be grasped.

City builders
Success has many authors and our role is to make space for city builders large and small to join with us in shaping the Future of Plymouth. Through strategic partnership we can work with the best to be the best. There should be a balance of profit, non-profit and social purposes, of social activism and entrepreneurship, of public, private and community. This isn’t about do-gooding but about doing good, we will work with all kinds of organisations and people to deliver all manner of public good.

Social workers
Our plan is for the Civic Centre to become a co-working hub and a crucible of innovative ideas for the city and future high street. Our plan is simple, invest in people and the rest will follow. But invest in creative, industrious, pioneering people and the rest will follow sooner. We believe in incubation, innovation, creative capital, gainful employment, good neighbours, naked optimism – and good times along the way.

Co–habiters
There are new ways of working and new ways of living spearheaded by pioneering people looking for a better way. Through our communal model we will attract adventurous and pioneering people to set up home and set up shop in the city centre, people who will contribute to new forms of work, leisure and creativity. And by growing the density of city centre residential we also grow the community of people who will support the great neighborhood bars, restaurants, bakeries and grocers that also form a central part of the visitor attraction in most European cities.
The Future High Street is a mixed bag, it can’t be planned by city planners or whipped up by PR consultants. The Future High Street will be multi-authored and mixed use, at times unruly, full of big ideas and small moments, it will be residential, commercial, leisure, retail, it will be the sum of endeavours by city builders of all kinds from top down to bottom up.

We are Plymouth

The Future High Street is a globally challenging looking for local solution. We can ask what can be done, but more importantly we should ask what can be gained. We can support the transformation to a place of local character and distinctiveness; we can encourage a transition from retail only to a diverse, mixed use high street serving new city dwellers and all the people of Plymouth; we can embrace the creatives, pioneers and entrepreneurs that will make the high street an essential part of city life and an integral part of the cultural and tourism offer.

We need more diversity on the high street. More social (restaurants, bars, cafés); more creativity; more city living; more independents; more happenings. In short, more people for more reasons more of the time. This is an opportunity to encourage local distinctiveness, because it is the way a city distinguishes itself that makes it a ‘place to be’.

This diversification represents a reversal of the post-war plan in orderly and defined precincts. We might still think about zoning and character areas, but the process should be much more bottom-up and top-down. By filling the buildings with pioneering uses, urban living, incubators, makers, shakers, co-working and flexible event space we create a hotbed of local pioneers ready to populate the wider high street and city centres. By curating and programming the Civic Square, Civic building and Guildhall and using this to address wider cultural infrastructure we create a more complete and cohesive experience of Plymouth as a thriving city.

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We WANT TO BE LIKE
LONDON
BRISTOL
BOURNEMOUTH
EXETER
PLYMOUTH

The Future High Street

KICK-START A LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE ‘FUTURE HIGH STREET’
A word from the leader

In the 1960s the Civic Centre and Guildhall acted as beacons of our post-war response. Now they will shine as beacons of our post-COVID response. They are both important landmarks in every respect.

What this project does is to restore the buildings to their former glory and their rightful place at the heart of the city centre.

They will promote confidence and belief and act as a symbol of the commitment that the Council, Urban Splash and the University have towards the city.

Plymouth has been diversifying its economic base for a number of years. The conference and events market is a key growth sector which is generating revenue to the city, harnessing their spending power and increasing the role of the arts and creative industries.

It will be great to see the Civic Centre once again throw its doors open to the public, giving them an opportunity to be part of its future – and see the city from its rooftop!

This will be a massive vote of confidence in Plymouth, Britain’s Ocean City.

Tudor Evans

This plan is the beginning, it’s a big statement of intent and just the right amount of top down. The Future High Street is waiting. The plan is simplicity itself. The scheming is at an end. Movers are moved, shakers are shaken. This is about taking the lid of the whole thing.
Royal William Yard, Plymouth

Seeing it now it as easy to underestimate the challenge facing the City and development partners Urban Splash in tackling this historic site. But with vision and perseverance the team has created an inclusive community to be proud of and a legacy for the future, and its respect and love for culture and creativity spills over into everything at the Yard, which now boasts over 200 homes and over 115,000 sq. ft of commercial space; housing a vibrant mix of people and businesses. Royal William Yard is the pride of Plymouth and an integral part of the City’s regeneration story.

"WE’VE DONE THIS BEFORE"

"IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE REGENERATION OF THE YARD AND TO SEE IT GROW TO BECOME A UNIQUE AND THRIVING DESTINATION FOR ALL"
Gillespie Yunnie Architects

"WE ARE THRILLED TO HAVE FOUND OUR NEW HOME AT ON SUCH A BEAUTIFUL STRETCH OF OUR REGION’S COASTLINE"
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"THE YARD WAS AN OBVIOUS LOCATION FOR US. THERE WAS A LOT OF BUZZ AROUND WHAT THE AREA WOULD BECOME AFTER THE REDEVELOPMENT"
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THE FUTURE HIGH STREET IS LIVE

Our plan is simple, it’s a plan to get the wheels in motion, to give the Future High Street a leg up, a helping hand and a shot in the arm. Our plan starts with a positive statement of intent, a scheme that will be a crucible for the pioneering work to come. This project is about creating momentum and being ready to hand over the reins so that ownership of the Future High Street is a multiverse of good ideas, big personalities and quiet revolutions. Visit futurehighstreetplymouth.com to get involved.