

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 9 November 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Exeter Local Plan Issues Report

Report summary:

This report sets out a proposed response to Exeter City Council in respect of a local plan issues document that they are consulting on. The consultation document is succinct and sets out a positive vision for the City. It does not raise any specific issues that are identified as causing direct concerns for East Devon though it is, nonetheless, seen as appropriate to provide a response.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

- (1) That Strategic Planning Committee note the proposed response to the Exeter City Council Local Plan Issues consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that Members are aware of the local plan work in Exeter and to provide a proposed response to the consultation.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information See links in the attached report.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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1 Introduction

1.1 Members' attention is drawn to the fact that Exeter City Council are producing a new local plan for the city and are seeking views on an issues consultation document. By way of introduction the document advises:

"New Exeter Local Plan

We are starting work on a new Local Plan. This plan will shape the future of Exeter for the next twenty years and will be the basis for how the city continues to evolve and meet the needs of the community. It will be the main planning policy document for Exeter, setting out where development should take place and it will be vital in making decisions on planning applications"

1.2 The consultation closes on the 15 November 2021 and the consultation document can be viewed at: <https://exeter.gov.uk/media/5749/nelp.pdf>

1.3 The consultation document is quite short and summarises some of the key issues that the City Council identify as significant in terms of preparation of its future local plan. Views are sought and within the consultation document there are six questions posed. The remainder of this report to Strategic Planning Committee briefly comments on matters raised, highlights the questions asked and presents a proposed response to each one.

The need for a new local plan for the City

1.4 The consultation document starts off by setting the scene and explains why there is a need for a new local plan. It is noted in the text that the existing plan for the city is getting old.

1.5 It is proposed that the new Local Plan will include:

- A vision and objectives
- A strategy setting out how the city will evolve and how development will take place
- A series of policies to guide decisions on planning applications
- Sites for housing, jobs and other types of development
- Proposals for environmental protection and enhancement
- Proposals for infrastructure projects
- A system for monitoring the effectiveness of the Local Plan

1.6 **Question 1** of the documents asks:

Do you have any comments on the content of the new Local Plan and its relationship with other plans?

1.7 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council welcome the production of a new local plan for the city of Exeter. The key elements identified in the issues document set out succinct framework for the City to work with going forward. It will be important for the City Council to work with neighbouring bodies and authorities as proposals are developed and tested through the local plan production process. There will be cross-boundary matters that the City Council will need to take into account as the plan develops and these should be addressed in a consistent and logical manner with neighbouring bodies.

2 Key issues facing the city

2.1 The plan continues by identifying a series of headline issues, with supporting commentary accompanying each, which the City council identify as important for the future planning of the City. The identified issues are:

- Climate emergency
- Health and wellbeing
- Homes
- Economy and jobs
- The future of high streets
- High quality places and design
- Infrastructure and community facilities

2.2 **Question 2** of the documents asks:

Are these the main issues facing Exeter? Are there any issues which we should change, add or remove?

2.3 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council does not have specific comment to make on the issues identified in the consultation document suffice to note that they cover key matters that can be expected to be considered and addressed through production of a single local plan covering all policy matters falling to the City Council.

3 The vision set out in the document

3.1 The plan identifies a vision for Exeter which reads:

“Exeter has a vision for growth as a connected city region consisting of thriving linked communities set within an exceptional environmental setting. This clear vision represents a commitment to strengthen neighbourhoods; create new communities; invest in sustainable transport; and deliver the infrastructure needed to attract investment and improve quality of life. Exeter aims to be recognised as a leading sustainable city and global leader in

addressing the social, economic and environmental challenges of climate change and urbanisation.

We are striving to make Exeter the most active and accessible city in England. Our Corporate Plan is focussed on tackling congestion and accessibility, promoting active and healthy lifestyles and building great neighbourhoods.

The vision has seven key elements:

- *An innovative and analytical city*
- *A healthy and inclusive city*
- *The most active city in the UK*
- *Accessible world class education*
- *A liveable and connected city*
- *A leading sustainable city*
- *Culture”*

3.2 The vision is clearly ambitious though it is not fully clear exactly what all elements mean.

3.3 **Question 3** of the documents asks:

Do you have any comments to make on this vision for the new Local Plan?

3.3 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council does not have specific observations on the vision set out in the document. It is clearly very aspirational and sets out challenges for the City Council ahead if the vision is to be delivered. In due course it will be helpful to see more detail on key components including in respect of definitions of what some of the terms in the vision mean and how they may be implemented in practice.

4 The pattern and quality of future development in Exeter

4.1 The issues document discusses potential options for addressing development needs in the City. The current strategy for accommodating development is highlighted and the text advises on the need to review the past approach which includes:

- *“Focus on the city centre, existing centres and previously developed land, including the regeneration of the Grecian Quarter (around Sidwell Street and the bus station) and the Water Lane area (around the canal in the Haven Banks area)*
- *Provide for additional development in sustainable urban extensions on the edges of the city*
- *Steer development away from the hills to the north and north west - the important landscape areas for the city”*

4.2 The issues document continues by looking forward and refers to the Liveable Exeter programme noting that

“This will create new homes for the city through a series of eight, high quality development sites. On the back of this work, Exeter has been recognised as a ‘Garden Community’

which brings support from Government to make sure that the city grows in a sustainable way with a real focus on high quality development working well for local communities.”

4.3 Further in this section the documents lists *“Ideas which could shape the future pattern of development in the city”*, these are:

- *“Redevelopment of brownfield land in the city*
- *Higher density development in the city centre and close by*
- *Smaller developments on the edge of the city*
- *Steering development away from sensitive environmental areas such as the Exe Estuary and hills to the north and north west of the city*
- *Locating development to maximise walking and cycling and to make use of public transport”*

4.4 **Question 4** of the documents asks:

Do you have any comments on the ideas which could shape the future pattern of development in Exeter?

4.5 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council would, in principle, wish to endorse the ideas set out in the document. The focussing of development in city centre areas coupled with avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas for development represents a sustainable vision for the growth of the city. The Council is pleased to see that the City Council are seeking to maximise the opportunities for growth within the city through redeveloping brownfield sites and making efficient use of sites within the city centre while limiting growth on the edge of the city. It is however important that where existing uses are displaced by this approach that the new Local Plan provides opportunities for their relocation within the city.

4.6 This section of the document then continues by referring to some ideas which could shape the future quality of development in the city. The listed ideas are:

- *“Build distinctive development with local identity*
- *Ensure well-designed, vibrant places with a mixture of uses*
- *Support healthy lifestyles*
- *Provide a variety of high quality and flexible homes*
- *Deliver appropriately designed infrastructure when it's needed*
- *Provide developments for local employment, education and skills*
- *Enhance the natural and historic environment*
- *Provide green infrastructure such parks and open space*
- *Ensure that development will produce ‘net zero’ carbon emissions*
- *Deliver high quality active travel and low carbon transport*
- *Make sure that development is resilient to future change”*

4.7 **Question 5** of the documents asks:

Do you have any comments on the ideas which could shape the future quality of development in Exeter?

4.8 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council would not at this stage wish to add to the listed ideas which could shape future development in Exeter

5 What happens next

5.1 The document concludes by advising that responses will help shape the new local plan with a draft plan being consulted on in 2022 to be followed by a Publication draft, a chance for further comment and submission to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

5.2 The final **question 6** of the documents asks:

Are there any further comments you would like to make on the new Exeter Local Plan?

5.3 The proposed response of East Devon District Council is as follows:

East Devon District Council welcomes the opportunity for further dialogue and discussion with Exeter City Council as the plan making progresses.

6 Actions for East Devon District Council

6.1 It will be relevant for this Council to work with the City Council and other partners and neighbours over the coming years. Although smaller than East Devon the city of Exeter is the nearest large urban centre to the District and has a significant impact on East Devon especially the District's western fringes.

6.2 Members are asked to note the proposed responses set out in this report.

Financial implications:

There are no financial implications on which to comment.

Legal implications:

The duty to co-operate is a term given to the legal requirement to work with certain bodies in respect of strategic cross boundary issues that could have a significant impact on at least two local planning authority areas. If a Local Plan is not prepared in a way that meets the 'duty to co-operate', it will not be examined and cannot be found sound and adopted. The Exeter Local Plan Issues Consultation Document is an early step for Exeter City Council in developing their new Local Plan. There are no legal implications other than as set out in the report.