

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP  
9 FEBRUARY 2010**

**EXECUTIVE  
9 FEBRUARY 2010**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE  
22 FEBRUARY 2010**

**MASTERPLAN FOR THE FUTURE  
DEVELOPMENT OF NEWCOURT**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to brief Members on a draft Masterplan, to seek approval for its use for Development Management purposes and for its publication for public consultation as a proposed draft Supplementary Planning Document.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) proposed 11,000 dwellings in Exeter between 2006-2026. The Panel who held the Examination in Public of the RSS recommended, in December 2007, a limited increase from 11,000 to 12,000 dwellings. The "Proposed Changes", published by the Secretary of State in July 2008, further increase the target for the City to 15,000 dwellings. Whichever of these targets is finally set, the full development of the strategic development areas at Newcourt, Alphington and Monkerton / Hill Barton, that were the subject of the Core Strategy consultation in October / November 2009, will be required.
- 2.2 The draft RSS sets a target net density for urban extensions of at least 50 dwellings per hectare.
- 2.3 The Newcourt study area, delineated on the plan at Appendix A, is located at the eastern edge of Exeter, around 4 miles from Exeter city centre and in close proximity to Junction 30 of the M5 motorway. Triangular in shape it is bounded by the A379 to the west, the M5 to the east and Topsham Road to the south. The Exeter to Exmouth rail line crosses the area from north to south.
- 2.4 The Exeter Local Plan First Review allocates parts of the Masterplan area for residential and employment use but protects the other parts for landscape and ecology reasons. The emerging Core Strategy proposes that the whole of this area should be a strategic allocation but the Core Strategy cannot provide detailed guidance. There is significant developer interest in bringing forward development on unallocated sites and there is therefore a need to provide guidance for development in the short term.

- 2.5 The Masterplan has been prepared by Exeter City Council working with Devon County Council. The Masterplan is based on a Masterplan study commissioned from Atkins Design Solutions, however that work has been supplemented by the Growth Point Green Infrastructure Study and additional work prepared by Devon County Council on education provision and transport matters.
- 2.6 The Masterplan for the Newcourt area was prepared to:
- Present a comprehensive development strategy based on the principles of sustainability, which provides for a mixture of land uses i.e. housing and employment supported by local retail and community facilities and green infrastructure;
  - Identify and protect key habitats and linkages;
  - Identify the development capacity of the area;
  - Identify arrangements for sustainable access and movement within the site and linkages with surrounding areas;
  - Provide a sound basis for allocating land in the Exeter Local Development Framework (LDF);
  - Establish a clear framework within which any early planning application for development in the area could be determined.
- 2.7 The Masterplan figure is attached to this report as Appendix B.

### **3 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

- 3.1 The emerging Core Strategy anticipates designation of the whole of the Newcourt area as a strategic development area and the Masterplan identifies a potential for 2300 dwellings and 16 hectares of employment land. These dwellings are in addition to the 1176 dwellings within the Masterplan Area which either have planning consent or a resolution to grant planning consent, the employment area is an increase on the Local Plan allocation of 12.4 hectares.
- 3.2 The process of masterplanning identified two key challenges for development of the area.
- (i) How to promote sustainable modes of transport over use of the car?*
- 3.3 Promoting walking, cycling and the use of public transport has a wide range of benefits from improving health and encouraging social interaction to reducing road congestion and helping to move towards low carbon living, tackling issues of climate change and pollution.
- 3.4 The Masterplan promotes a pattern of development in which a network of footpaths, cycleways and linear green spaces forms the permeable movement network through the area, linking homes with key destinations and public transport hubs to encourage people to use sustainable modes for short journeys such as to the local shops, school or into the City. Providing high quality public transport both by bus and rail is also a fundamental part of the Masterplan. New cycle and pedestrian bridges are proposed

- 3.5 Principal vehicular access point to the area west of the railway line would be from the consented spine road linking the A379 in the north to Topsham Road in the south.
- 3.6 Land is already safeguarded for a future rail halt on the west side the line and it is proposed that land is safeguarded on both sides of the line. A halt in this location would significantly improve access to the area by public transport. A pedestrian and cycle bridge crossing the railway line should be provided in this location.

(ii) The potential to create a focus to the area.

- 3.7 The extent of the Masterplan area and quantum of residential development is considered to warrant the formation of a new local centre to give the area focus and identity.
- 3.8 Movement routes north/south through the site are constrained in the centre of the site by the position of the golf course. This creates a central point through which a high proportion of journeys and all the public transport services have to pass. It is considered that this makes the area on the spine route southeast of Newcourt House a good site for a local centre that includes community and any local retail facilities. Locating in this area should be enhanced by the provision of a direct link to the rail halt.
- 3.9 The Masterplan also sets out approaches to a number of topic areas where co-ordination across the site and across different land ownerships is required.
- 3.10 *Newcourt House.* Newcourt House is a Grade II Listed Building located in the centre of the Masterplan area. It is considered that this building has the potential to act as a landmark giving the Newcourt Area identity and character. It is proposed that open spaces are arranged to enhance the setting of this building and provide views of its facade. Newcourt House is currently occupied by the NHS Primary Care Trust. Any proposed change of use will be assessed in accordance with national planning policy and the development plan policies.
- 3.11 *Locally Listed Buildings.* There are two locally listed buildings on the Topsham Road frontage of the site. These buildings and their settings should be protected.
- 3.12 *Green Infrastructure.* A key benefit of a comprehensive approach to developing the wider site is to allow green spaces to be laid out as a connected network to maximise public utility and ecological value. The green linkages in the Masterplan area can set a framework for the location of other green spaces. The linear spaces will provide green travel and recreation routes and act as wildlife corridors linking the green spaces within the Masterplan area to those in the surrounding area.
- 3.13 *Development areas.* The Masterplan divides the study area into 9 development areas. These shown on the Masterplan figure with the residential areas references a to g, the employment areas y and z. There is potential for more detailed planning guidance or design codes to be prepared for each sub area.

- 3.14 *Residential Densities.* The overall net housing density is around 50 dwellings per hectare in accordance with draft RSS guidance for urban extensions. Densities of around 50 dwellings per hectare will ensure best use is made of available development land and will help ensure the viability of local services and public transport.
- 3.15 *Drainage.* Comprehensive sustainable urban drainage systems will be required to ensure surface water drainage does not increase run-off rates or create surface water flooding problems.
- 3.16 *Education.* Primary education provision is made through the allocation of land for two new two form entry primary schools. Secondary education provision can be accommodated through the expansion existing secondary schools.
- 3.17 *Gypsy and traveller site.* The requirement that provision for Gypsies and Travellers be made within the city can in part be accommodated in the study area. The location of such a site should be established through the consultation process that will be undertaken in forming a Supplementary Planning Document. A site should be positioned so that it adjoins new development, rather than existing, provided that the design criteria can be met.
- 3.18 *Noise.* The M5 has a significant potential to reduce quality of life through noise nuisance. Applications for residential development in particular will need to demonstrate that adequate levels of amenity are achieved. Buffer zones and acoustic attenuation measures including landscape treatments will need to be considered.

#### **4 PURPOSE OF MASTERPLAN**

- 4.1 Planning Member Working Group are asked to support, Planning Committee are asked to note and Executive to approve the Masterplan for Development Management purposes. Whilst it will only have limited weight until adopted, there is a danger that the desire to see comprehensive development of the area could be undermined if decisions any individual proposal is taken in the absence of a co-ordinating plan.
- 4.2 Planning Member Working Group are asked to support, Planning Committee are asked to note and Executive to approve the publication of the Masterplan study as a draft Supplementary Planning Document. There will be a six week period for public consultation, and then Planning Member Working Group and Executive will be asked to consider a more detailed report on the proposed SPD, and the public representations upon it, later in the year. The public consultation will involve display of material in the Civic Centre offices and Libraries and on the City Council's website.

## **5 ADVICE SOUGHT/RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That Planning Member Working Group supports the use of the Masterplan for Development Management purposes and publication of the draft Masterplan for public consultation as a proposed Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.2 That Executive agrees the use of the Masterplan for Development Management purposes and publication of the draft Masterplan for public consultation as a proposed Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.3 That Planning Committee supports the use of the Masterplan for Development Management purposes and publication of the draft Masterplan for public consultation as a proposed Supplementary Planning Document.

**RICHARD SHORT  
HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL**

### **ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

#### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

##### **Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options paper 2006.  
Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy Consultation Paper 2009.  
Transportation Access Strategy Addendum Report, Devon County Council  
Education Statement, Devon County Council  
Newcourt Masterplan Preferred Option, Exeter City Council  
Newcourt Masterplanning Study, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council  
Transportation Technical Report, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council  
Strategic Air Quality Assessment, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council  
Water Quality Impact Assessment, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council  
Implementation Plan, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council  
Green Infrastructure Strategy, Exeter and East Devon Growth Point