

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY

21 JANUARY 2015

CONGESTION IN EXETER

1 Causes and remedies

- 1.1 In simple terms, congestion is caused by too much traffic using too little road space – so to reduce it, it is necessary either to reduce traffic or increase road space, or both.
- 1.2 There is a bit of scope for road improvements around Exeter (eg. Bridge Road outbound widening, Tithebarn link road – see below), but not many other opportunities for improvement, especially closer to the city centre. Efforts therefore need to be concentrated on providing attractive alternatives to single occupancy car use, and persuading people to use them. With Exeter's population growing, car travel needs to account for a smaller share of journeys if we are to prevent congestion from getting worse.

2 How do Exeter residents actually travel?

- 2.1 Appendix 1 contains two tables using data from the 2011 Census. Table 1 shows that the percentage of households in Exeter without access to a car or van was 27.1 (little changed from 2001 when it was 27.6%). The 2011 figure was slightly higher than the national figure (for England and Wales) of 25.6%, and well above the Devon average of 17.4%. The Exeter average hides some extremes: St Davids, Newtown and St James have far more households without cars even than the Exeter average (52, 46 and 40% respectively), whereas in Duryard and St Loyes it is only about 13%, fewer even than the Devon average.
- 2.2 In Table 2, the travel to work figures from the 2011 census have been calculated as a percentage of the working population of each ward. (Incidentally, Duryard has the highest percentage of people not in employment, at 70.2%.) Where people have indicated that they travel by “underground, metro, light rail or tram” (0.1% overall), it has been assumed that they travel by train. Figures for taxi journeys all rounded to 0% and have therefore been omitted.
- 2.3 Green shading in Table 2 indicates a “better” performance than the Exeter average for use of public transport or active travel modes (higher than average) or driving (lower). The message from this seems to be that if you provide people with a good alternative to the car, they are more likely to use that alternative; Mincinglake ward is well served by buses and delivers the highest percentage of bus use in the city, whereas cycling is generally popular in the wards with better cycle routes, particularly those adjoining the river.
- 2.4 Additional columns have been included in Table 2 showing percentages using public transport (ie. bus and rail columns combined), active travel modes (bicycle and on foot columns combined), and finally a column for public transport and active travel combined. It is important to note that the joint contribution made by the sustainable modes keeps down commuting as a car driver to 47.5% (although these are Exeter residents; much of the city's traffic

and congestion is caused by drivers travelling from elsewhere). So rather than seeing cycling and rail as catering overall for “only” 6.3 and 2.1% of journeys to work (respectively), we need to recognise the greater contribution they make on specific corridors, as well as their contribution to the impressive 40.5% combined share of “active” travel modes and public transport. It is more difficult to maintain this sustainable modal split with the newer developments on the city’s fringes; therefore we keep striving to promote sustainable travel within and from these developments so that the city’s attractiveness as a place to live and work is not degraded by worsening congestion and air quality.

- 2.5 I would stress that these figures are for residents of Exeter. At 65.1%, the proportion of Devon residents travelling to work in a car (driving or as a passenger) is relatively high, and of course many of these drive into Exeter.

3 What are we doing to try to reduce congestion?

- 3.1 Exeter City Council is involved in transport issues in a number of ways:-
- (a) As local planning authority, we plan the location of development in relation to transport networks. We work closely with Devon County Council in this regard; the City Council’s spatial planning policies informed production of DCC’s Local Transport Plan, and conversely DCC produced a body of evidence to support our adopted Core Strategy. A product of this collaboration is the Devon Metro proposals, referred to below at paragraph 4.2, whereby it is proposed to serve Exeter’s new development areas by an improved rail system.
 - (b) Also as local planning authority, we endeavour to ensure that new development is located and designed to maximise use of sustainable travel modes.
 - (c) We provide some transport infrastructure, notably cycling and walking routes through our open spaces, and off-street car parks.
 - (d) We respond to consultations from government and elsewhere.
- 3.2 It will be seen from the content of this report that in many cases Exeter City Council’s involvement in projects is as more than a mere consultee. Much of our input into transport issues is through working in partnership with DCC, and influencing decisions made by them and others to ensure that Exeter’s interests are promoted. Our views on transport matters are conveyed to the LEP via the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board and through participation by the Principal Project Manager (Infrastructure Management & Delivery) in the LEP’s Transport Group. He also represents the Council on the Regional Group for Network Rail’s Long Term Planning Process.

4 Rail

- 4.1 Scrutiny Economy Committee has previously resolved to endorse DCC’s Devon Metro proposals, and to support the principle of working with DCC and other stakeholders to lobby for rail improvements.
- 4.2 A summary of the Devon Metro proposals is included as Appendix 2. They include new stations at Newcourt, Cranbrook and Marsh Barton and, in the

longer term, Monkerton/Hill Barton. Newcourt and Cranbrook stations are due to open this spring, and Marsh Barton is programmed for 2016.

- 4.3 The national shortage of rolling stock causes problems in providing sufficient capacity, particularly on our local lines where passenger numbers are continuing to increase. It appears increasingly likely that our demands for more and better carriages will be satisfied when the Thames Valley services are electrified from around 2016 and diesel stock is available for cascade.
- 4.4 Devon County Council is carrying out feasibility work in relation to a further passing loop on the Waterloo line, which would not only increase its effectiveness as a diversionary route, but enable a half-hourly service to operate to Cranbrook, making rail a more attractive travel option to residents of the new town.

5 Bus

- 5.1 Incremental improvements continue to be made to the city's bus services, particularly to serve new development within and just outside the city boundary, using section 106 money from developers. Recent examples are the B service through Marsh Barton to Exminster, and the 4 to Cranbrook and beyond.
- 5.2 In national comparisons, Exeter scores well for bus route coverage and frequency, but poorly for journey speed. There is little scope for improving the relatively small amount of bus priority, although opportunities should be taken when they arise. The bus has a lot of potential in reducing congestion in Exeter; unlike rail, it is relatively simple to introduce new services and they can run just about anywhere. The City Council needs to support opportunities to improve bus services and bus priority when they arise.
- 5.7 Redevelopment of the bus station site will provide an opportunity to achieve a replacement facility that not only functions well as a bus station, but provides a welcoming gateway to the city. Officers have been working to ensure that the proposals do not compromise the effectiveness of this vital piece of transport infrastructure.

6 Road improvements and other major schemes

- 6.1 As mentioned in paragraph 3.1, funding for major schemes has now been devolved to the Local Transport Board, with further money awarded to the LEP in response to its Growth Bid.
- 6.2 The first round of schemes selected to be prioritised for LEP/LTB funding, subject to a satisfactory business case, include Marsh Barton station (see above) and Bridge Road outbound widening, preparatory work for which has already been undertaken.
- 6.3 Also recently commenced is construction of the first phase of the Tithebarn Lane link road, which is required to open up development sites in Monkerton and across the motorway in East Devon. This is being funded in part from the DfT's Local Pinch Point Fund, with further contributions from the Regional Growth Fund and from developers.

- 6.4 The proposed Alphington Park and Ride still lacks planning permission, but remains an important component of the Council's future transport strategy, supported by our Core Strategy. It is important that the City Council supports this vital piece of infrastructure through the planning process.

7 Cycling and walking

- 7.1 The Exeter Walking and Cycling Steering Group (comprising officers from ECC, DCC and a representative of Sustrans) continues to promote incremental improvements to the walking and cycling network. Devon County Council's recent successful bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund will enable more work to be done to promote walking and cycling in the city.
- 7.2 The City Council's Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by the Council in March 2013 and is proving helpful in ensuring that new development is designed to encourage the use of sustainable travel modes.

8 Next steps

- 8.1 The challenge for the City Council is not just to urge DCC and the other players to do as much as possible to promote sustainable transport modes, but also to support proposals wholeheartedly.
- 8.2 It has to be recognised that some transport schemes will arouse opposition, and not just to big schemes like a park and ride. Residents may object to changes to on-street parking, improvement of cycle facilities, introduction of a bus route down their street, or installation of a bus shelter, and car drivers may be opposed to bus priority. However, these facilities are all designed to make sustainable transport modes more attractive, with the aim of reducing congestion.
- 8.3 In the planning process too, there is pressure for compromises, with developers being resistant, for example, to providing first class walking or cycling facilities, or existing residents being opposed to new links to improve permeability. Again, these pressures need to be resisted in the interests of encouraging travel by non-car modes. Congestion has the potential to act as a brake on the city's economic growth (and may already be doing so), which means that addressing it has to be a high priority for the City Council.

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Appendix 1 – 2011 Census data

Table 1 – access to a car or van

	No Cars or Vans in Household	1 Car or Van in Household	2 Cars or Vans in Household	3 Cars or Vans in Household	4 or More Cars or Vans in Household
St David's	52.1	39.6	6.8	1.1	0.4
Newtown	46.4	37.9	12	2.7	1
St James	39.8	40.1	15.6	2.9	1.6
Priory	30.7	45.7	18.9	3.8	0.9
Whipton Barton	29	45.3	19.5	4.5	1.6
Polsloe	28.7	45.3	19.6	5	1.3
St Thomas	28.2	48.4	19.1	3.2	1.1
Exeter average	27.1	47.3	20.5	4	1.2
Heavitree	26.4	50.9	18.8	3.1	0.9
Mincinglake	24.8	47.6	21.3	5.1	1.2
St Leonard's	23	50.4	22.2	3.4	0.9
Alphington	21.4	49.8	22.8	4.6	1.4
Cowick	21.3	49.2	23.6	4.4	1.6
Topsham	20.5	50.8	23.5	4.1	1.2
Exwick	20.1	51.8	22.9	4.2	0.9
Pennsylvania	18.6	51.6	23.9	4.3	1.7
Pinhoe	18	49.6	26.1	4.5	1.8
Devon average	17.4	44.2	28.6	7	2.8
Duryard	13	48.7	29.3	7.1	1.9
St Loyes	12.7	49	30.9	5.7	1.7

Table 2 – Travel to work

	Those in work	Work Mainly at or From Home	Train	Bus, Minibus or Coach	Public transport combined	Motorcycle, Scooter or Moped	Driving a Car or Van	Passenger in a Car or Van	Bicycle	On Foot	Active travel combined	Active or public transport	Other Method of Travel to Work
Devon	353913	9.4%	1.6%	3.8%	5.4%	1.0%	60.1%	5.0%	2.7%	15.3%	18.0%	23.4%	0.8%
Exeter	57139	4.6%	2.1%	9.2%	11.3%	1.2%	47.5%	5.3%	6.3%	22.9%	29.2%	40.5%	0.5%
Exwick	4853	3.2%	1.6%	10.4%	12.0%	1.9%	55.8%	7.0%	5.4%	14.0%	19.3%	31.3%	0.4%
Priory	4332	3.3%	0.8%	13.3%	14.1%	1.8%	47.5%	6.6%	6.6%	19.4%	25.9%	40.0%	0.5%
Alphington	4670	4.2%	0.9%	7.7%	8.7%	1.0%	53.8%	5.8%	6.8%	19.1%	25.9%	34.5%	0.4%
St James	2578	5.4%	4.0%	6.5%	10.4%	0.5%	27.9%	2.9%	5.7%	45.5%	51.2%	61.6%	0.7%
St David's	3078	5.0%	4.0%	9.7%	13.7%	0.6%	27.5%	3.8%	6.2%	42.2%	48.5%	62.2%	0.5%
Polsloe	3355	4.5%	2.4%	6.9%	9.2%	0.7%	38.5%	4.6%	8.3%	33.5%	41.8%	51.0%	0.3%
Whipton Barton	3543	3.3%	1.0%	10.9%	11.9%	1.5%	54.5%	7.1%	5.6%	15.4%	21.0%	32.9%	0.3%
St Thomas	3706	4.3%	2.1%	10.0%	12.1%	1.2%	44.7%	4.6%	6.9%	25.6%	32.5%	44.5%	0.3%
Newtown	2776	4.5%	2.5%	9.4%	11.9%	0.7%	31.7%	3.4%	7.4%	39.0%	46.4%	58.4%	0.8%
St Loyes	3591	3.7%	3.4%	8.0%	11.4%	1.1%	58.3%	5.9%	4.8%	14.2%	19.0%	30.4%	0.3%
Duryard	1324	7.1%	2.6%	7.1%	9.7%	0.8%	44.8%	5.5%	4.0%	26.7%	30.7%	40.5%	0.5%
Pinhoe	2959	4.0%	2.4%	10.0%	12.3%	1.6%	60.3%	6.0%	4.8%	10.2%	15.0%	27.3%	0.5%
Heavitree	2940	4.8%	1.5%	7.7%	9.1%	1.2%	41.4%	5.0%	7.7%	30.3%	38.0%	47.1%	0.4%
Pennsylvania	2665	6.0%	1.3%	9.4%	10.7%	1.4%	51.4%	5.6%	6.0%	17.8%	23.9%	34.5%	0.6%
Mincinglake	2821	3.1%	1.0%	13.4%	14.4%	1.9%	56.9%	7.4%	5.4%	10.4%	15.7%	30.1%	0.2%
Cowick	2659	3.5%	0.9%	9.5%	10.3%	2.0%	54.2%	5.6%	5.3%	18.2%	23.5%	33.8%	0.4%
St Leonard's	2761	7.9%	1.9%	4.7%	6.6%	0.7%	40.1%	3.0%	8.9%	32.1%	41.0%	47.6%	0.5%
Topsham	2528	9.3%	5.6%	7.9%	13.4%	0.8%	53.0%	3.6%	7.7%	11.4%	19.1%	32.6%	0.6%

