Exeter Community Forum

Exeter Community Strategy

Draft 2 for consultation until 24th February 2016

www.exetercommunityforum.net

Contents

1 .   Introduction

The Exeter Community Strategy will underpin community-led development in the city for ten years from 2016. It will provide a way for the community to take lead, build its capacity to own and manage assets, fund and deliver initiatives and services, work with partners, and disburse financial support for community initiatives. It is based on a statement of principles of community-led development to which partners are invited to sign up, and will embody openness and accountability in all its activities.

1.1   History and context

The Exeter Community Strategy has grown out of two complementary developments, one within Exeter communities, and the other within Exeter City Council

In 2014, co-operation between a number of community-led groups engaged in the planning process led to Exeter Community Forum being created. The forum allows community associations to meet formally with other groups, alongside local councillors, to promote community-led development. In particular, it examined how the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy ("the neighbourhood CIL") should be allocated.

The CIL is a planning charge imposed on development, which is used to pay for infrastructure to support that development. The neighbourhood portion is 15% of the levy, which can be spent on addressing the demands development places on an area.

In early 2015, Exeter City Council decided the neighbourhood CIL should be on spent developing and implementing a community-level strategy for addressing the demands of development. It endorsed a bottom-up approach, noting that community groups had undertaken to engage with others across the city regarding a process for allocating the neighbourhood CIL.

During 2015 Exeter Community Forum engaged local facilitators from CAG Consultants to help them develop the strategy, and in particular identify the needs and aspirations of groups and individuals across the city. To do this, a series of community consultation events were held, and existing community plans and survey reports were reviewed.

At the same time, Exeter City Council and other agencies and organisations were consulted in a variety of ways. Many councillors attended consultation events in their wards, and meetings were held with council officers. Voluntary sector organisations also contributed ideas and recommended approaches to addressing community needs.

The Exeter Community Strategy is the distillation of this work. It shows how community-led development, supported by a wide range of partners, and paid for by the neighbourhood CIL and other investment, can achieve its vision.

1.2   The Exeter Community Strategy is a shared vision

The Exeter Community Strategy reflects the shared vision of Exeter communities and Exeter City Council. Both have signed up [Note: this is the proposed final text – this work has been undertaken in conjunction with Exeter City Council which is in the process of reviewing and adopting the strategy] to its principles of commitment to community-led development, and both intend to work together to realise the vision. They

invite other partners, including statutory and voluntary agencies, to join them by signing up to the principles, which are described in section 2, and collaborate in the delivery of the work programme.

While the principles will not change, the Exeter Community Strategy is a living document. It will develop as communities develop, and change as needs and opportunities change. By doing so, it will be relevant and valuable into the future.

2 .   The statement of principles of community-led development

This strategy promotes community-led development. This is a way of strengthening civil society by reflecting the importance of the views and actions of communities, when making policy and delivering actions. It empowers local communities, by increasing the capacity of:

- people as active citizens, through their community groups, organisations and networks, and
- Institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities[1].

Community-led development is desirable because it:

- establishes strong communities that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life; and
- helps people to recognise and develop their ability and potential, and organise themselves to respond to shared problems and needs.

Together, these can create a healthy community – that is, one which is good to live in, will continue, and is fair. Figure 1 shows how such a healthy community needs to be working, caring, safe and creative, and belong to its citizens. In turn, those things are achieved through personal development, positive action, communities organising, and people participating.

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[1] http://www.scdc.org.uk/who/what-is-community-development/
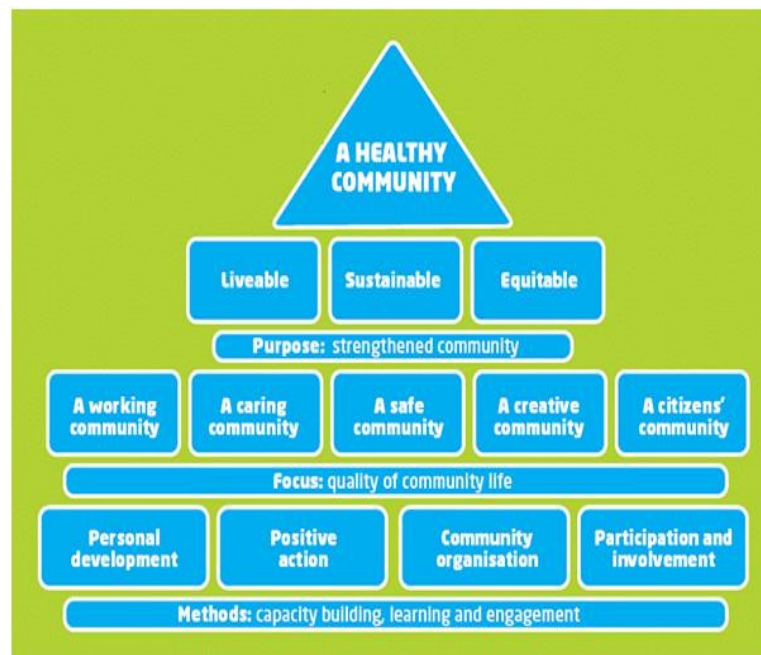
Community-led development will also help the Exeter Community Strategy to:

- support communities to deliver effective actions
- increase the effectiveness of CIL spend
- Increase the sustainability of projects supported

2.1 The principles of community-led development

Community-led development requires the commitment and active participation of citizens and councils and other agencies. To help establish this, the Exeter Community Strategy invites community groups, local authorities and statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations and businesses to sign up to the following set of principles of community-led development.[2]

Exeter City Council has adopted a statement of community involvement, as required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, designed to strengthen community involvement and improve the quality of the planning process. The statement of principles of community-led development complements, and is wider than, this. It moves beyond planning, to: define healthy communities; provide a focus on specific areas which need to be addressed to create them; show how they can be achieved, and invites commitment.

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[2] http://www.scdc.org.uk/who/what-is-community-development/ Note: The final principles, *Evidence of Commitment*, have been added.

Statement of Principles of Community-Led Development

Community-led development is essential to the creation of healthy communities. It is underpinned by principles which define its purpose, focus, and the methods used to deliver it.

Purpose:

People want to live in healthy communities. These are communities in which they:

- feel able to be who they are
- have positive prospects for their future
- experience respect and equal and fair treatment

Focus

To achieve this people want to be in a community that:

- creates wealth and gives everyone access to its benefits
- cares for all its members, when they need it, throughout their life span
- provides an environment that is safe and attractive
- enables people to express and celebrate their creativity and diverse cultures
- enables everyone to participate in decisions that affect their lives

Methods

To support people to contribute to the creation of such a community, community development:

- promotes opportunity for people to learn and develop their own skills
- reaches out to and involves those who may be excluded or disadvantaged
- helps communities to create organisations that can tackle their needs and represent their interests
- works to promote engagement and dialogue between communities and agencies that affect their lives

Evidence of commitment

A commitment to a community-led development is shown by, among other things:

- Partner agencies reflecting community development commitment in their strategies and delivery
- Enabling communities to decide and deliver
- Partnerships working to come up with solutions

2.2 The engagement principles

In addition to the above principles, the strategy adopts a set of engagement principles designed to ensure it is fair, transparent and accountable. They were used throughout the strategy development process, and will be applied in all future community engagement.

The engagement principles are that the communication and consultation process:

- is underpinned by fairness, equality and inclusion.

- Will be community-led and accountable, [being led by the Exeter Community Forum] and reflecting the views of local residents.
- Will be transparent and accessible. There will be clear processes for participating, and the results of the process will be clearly reported.

3 . Vision and priorities

The Exeter Community Strategy vision is:

Exeter is a city where communities lead development, helping create a city where everyone has access to the places and services which enable them to meet their needs, and lead fulfilling lives.

This vision has been created from priorities identified by communities. The priorities, some of which concerned places, and others people, are summarised below.

Places

- All communities have access to good meeting space and other facilities.
- There is sufficient and suitable social and private housing for everyone.
- There is high quality transport infrastructure - including roads and interchanges.
- Everyone can access good public transport within one mile.
- All the city has a clean and healthy environment.
- There are exciting and well-used community spaces.

People

- Communities have a voice and make a difference.
- Communities maintain their identity while being networked.
- People from different groups feel included.
- Education is accessible for the whole community.
- People from all communities have opportunities to become fitter and healthier.
- Everyone has the chance to have fun.
- Economic wellbeing and a living wage are available for everyone.
- Families facing challenges have the support they need.
- Communities know what others are doing.

4 . Delivering the vision

People were asked to give suggestions about how the priorities could be addressed, to realise the vision. The following suggestions by communities recurred frequently:

Places

1. New or renovated community buildings. These buildings would be for everyone, but people noted particular needs for:
    a. Improved facilities in community buildings for young people, and providing youth hubs;
    b. Community cafes, particularly for older people, and young mothers.
2. Retaining green spaces, and in particular enhancing local parks, increasing access to the Ludwell and Hoopern Valleys, and improving access to allotments.

3. Creating and improving access to sport and games facilities, including football pitches, sports club buildings, play areas and multi-use games areas.
4. Addressing transport issues, including making walking and cycling safer, using separate paths, improving bus services and reducing traffic jams, air pollution and parking problems.
5. Providing access to health, through new or improved surgeries and healthy living centres.

People
6. Improving access to information on what activities are available and future development plans, and increasing the level of communication from Exeter City Council.
7. Ensuring inclusion, particularly of ethnic minorities, older people and young people, including by providing youth workers.

Other suggestions were mentioned less frequently, but are also important:

Places
8. Retaining the look and feel of local streets, including with independent shops, and support for local businesses.
9. Improving housing, through affordable starter homes and sheltered accommodation.

People

10. Addressing the challenges or a large student population, including by increasing communication between local people and the university and Exeter College, and reducing the number of houses in multiple occupation.
11. Increasing the number of community workers.

Each community which participated in the work leading to this strategy also provided considerable detail about what was needed in their particular locality. It is vital that this detail is reflected in the strategy's implementation. For this reason, that detail has been collated into a set of mindmaps, which form an appendix to the strategy. Both the suggestions listed in this section, and the detail in the mindmaps, can be addressed in the action plans which implement this strategy, and in funding decisions.

5 5. Approach to the strategy and investment

The strategy's approach reflects four ambitions:

1. That the strategy should be community-led throughout its life, and change as the city, and the people and communities within it, change. To ensure this happens, it will be important that there is a mechanism to ensure communication between organisations in communities across the city. The Exeter Community Forum has been established for this purpose, and it is recommended that the Forum continue to operate to enable it to oversee progress on and propose changes to the strategy as they are needed.
2. To increase the confidence and capacity of community organisations to develop their own activities, and secure funding for them beyond any grant made under one of the programmes in this strategy.
3. To complement other investment taking place across the city, either directly, by providing match funding for key initiatives that help to achieve the strategy aims, or indirectly, by supporting a complementary initiative. An example of this is supporting community

organising; the organisers who are recruited may well help people access initiatives supported by other investment streams in the city

4. To stimulate joint commitment. Part of this comes from encouraging dialogue and joint activity between organisations and agencies working within each community. One way of many ways to help achieve this would be for such organisations and agencies to be located in the same building. (Examples of this include the Health Hub at Wat Tyler house and increasing numbers of third sector agencies based at the Civic Centre – Exeter Pound, Ubuntu Counselling Service, Multi-Lingua Interpreting Services, Exeter CAB and Flying Start Children's centre.)

5. Another element comes from organisations signing up to the principles to reflect them in their own policy and practice. Exeter City Council has already demonstrated its commitment through its community involvement and social inclusion resource. It is envisaged that this officer will continue to have a central role in supporting and co-ordinating the delivery of the joint activity laid out in the strategy.

6 6.   Action plan years 1-3

The aim of the first action plan will be to identify and address key issues, so that community-led development principles become embedded in city-wide policy development and service delivery, and to provide support for community planning, action and investment.

Some key issues have already been identified. They are shown in Table 1, with a proposed way of addressing each. Others will be added as the three programmes within the action plan are developed and delivered.

Table 1: Key issues for the first three years

Issue	Proposed way of addressing the issue
1. Enabling community development	
The need for wider understanding of, and support for, community-led development across the city.	- Provide information regarding the principles of community-led development to Exeter City Council councillors, officers and staff in other statutory and voluntary agencies, and encourage those agencies to sign up to, and apply, them. - Develop and deliver a community action programme - Review progress on the adoption of this approach across agencies.

The need to facilitate community action. The need to build the capacity of community groups and organisations to lead community development.	• Develop and deliver community planning and investment programmes • Discussion and agreement on how to address specific barriers to community developments issues including skills development, legal, governance and management structures and obtaining affordable and appropriate insurance. • Develop a process to enable community plans to inform the delivery of services and supplementary planning guidance where appropriate.
2. Service design and delivery	
The need to develop partnerships with councils, statutory agencies and other organisations so that community-led development is supported, community participation is embedded throughout service planning and delivery and duplication is avoided.	Continue to meet organisations across the city as this strategy is delivered to identify opportunities to work together.
The need to develop a policy for devolution of services to the community, to both empower communities to deliver their own solutions as it becomes more difficult for councils and other statutory agencies to deliver them directly.	Hold early and detailed discussions between the Exeter Community Forum and council officers to identify the issues, solutions and draw up an agreed policy and process Involve other organisations and agencies relevant to the service area.
3. Asset and facility ownership and transfer	
Exeter City Council and Exeter Community Forum agree that asset transfer can be an appropriate option in some cases. They also recognise its place in relation to the community right to challenge and to bid . It would be useful to increase clarity between Exeter Community Forum/other community/charitable organisations, and Exeter City Council councillors/officers who may be involved with transferring assets (such as green spaces and community buildings), on the policy and process, which acknowledges and addresses the many challenges involved. Such challenges include ensuring an appropriately constituted, governed and insured community entity is in place to receive assets and consistent and transparent application of policy across ECC.	The need for Exeter City Council to work with community and voluntary organisations to agree and implement a single policy and process for transferring land, buildings and other assets to community ownership or management or both, and access to appropriate support and training to officers and organisations going through the process.

6.1 Programme 1: Supporting community plans

A community plan identifies local problems and opportunities, sets out an achievable and long term vision for the future, and prepares a plan of action to achieve the vision. It is crucial to community-led development because it provides a framework for delivering activity which has been developed by the community. It can also contribute to decision-making through the supplementary planning guidance and help authorities in decision making and the delivery of services.

While some Exeter communities, such as Topsham and Priory, have at least fledgling community plans, (and St James has a neighbourhood plan), many do not.[3] This programme is designed to fill that gap, and to support plans for 'natural' communities, which may well be different from wards. They do not necessarily need to be geographic, and suggestions for plans for communities of identity, such as young people, will be considered. Such plans may be developed to whatever timetable is most appropriate – for example, a plan may be developed by young people over a period of a few weeks rather than many months.

The programme will pay for a community planning facilitator who will help communities, particularly those which have the greatest need, to prepare and produce plans and offer capacity building support and training. The facilitator may be hosted by a community organisation to act as a central resource covering the whole city. As well as advice and some facilitation, the officer will help communities identify and secure sources of funding to complete their plans, including from the Awards for All programme. This programme will also provide support for child care and similar intervention to maximise the opportunities for people to participate. The output will be six community plans in development or completed by March 2019.

6.2 Programme 2: Supporting community action

Community action is at the heart of community-led development. This programme will promote it through:

1. **Supporting community organising.** This can include any initiative which seeks to bring people together, to achieve a specific objective, or increase quality of life. One element will to build capacity among people living within communities to develop solutions to the problems they face, rather than taking a direct lead in solving them. Community organisers have been shown to be very effective, for example in Wonford. The programme will work with partners to match fund organisers in other communities. Where a community plan is being supported in particular area, the community organiser will work closely with the community plan facilitator, to ensure as many people as possible are able to take part in developing and implementing the plan.
2. **Supporting community initiatives.** This can include projects identified and promoted by small groups of people and new or established community-led organisations, provided they can demonstrate community support and meet local needs.

The outputs will be:

1. x community organising initiatives supported.
2. x joint delivery activities delivered.
3. x community initiatives supported each year.

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[3] Though some have completed community consultations, including Exwick, and Alphington (which has conducted a community needs survey).

6.3   Programme 3: Supporting community collaboration

This programme will be delivered through a community collaboration fund. The fund will:

1. support joint activity among community organisations, or between community organisations and local authorities or other agencies, and
2. be accessible to partners who have signed up to the principles of community-led development.

7 7.   Delivering the strategy

The strategy will be delivered by two mechanisms: direct grants and partnering with online funding mechanisms. This section describes them, and also shows how the scale of delivery will be increased by increasing the amount of finance available for investment.

7.1   Direct grants

This strategy will put in place a grant-making mechanism with the following features:

1. Transparency, regarding decision-making criteria and the identity and interests of panel members.
2. A grant assessment panel which includes equal representation from:
   - Community member[s] active in their community and enable a way to include young people on the panel.
   - Partner participation, with an Exeter City Council councillor as a regular panel member, and the Exeter City and Devon County councillors for the ward, where a project is based, able to comment.
3. An application and approval process which is simple, and as fast as is reasonable. The process will be developed in detail at the start of the strategy's delivery phase.

The administration of this programme will be straightforward as possible. It will require funding and the option of administration delivered by community enabling team at ECC and other options will be examined). The opportunity will be explored to source part of this funding from on CIL money held on deposit.

7.2   Crowd-funding and Web-Based Fundraising

Crowdfunding is a way of raising finance for a project or business by asking a large number of people to each provide a (usually) small amount of money. Most crowd-funding involves using the internet. There are many websites offering slightly different approaches. Some invite donations, while others offer gifts, a financial return, or a share in a business in return.

Localgiving.com allows community groups and other local organisations which have charitable aims, but are not registered charities, to invite donations, and receive gift aid.

Most crowdfunding websites do not require organisations to have charitable aims. Crowdfunder was used very successfully in Plymouth as a way of allocating the neighbourhood CIL.

The benefits of a crowdfunding approach to the strategy include:

1. It is community-led, because any organisation within the city may list a project.
2. It specifies a guaranteed minimum level of match for CIL money invested, thus facilitating more financial support to an initiative than would be available from CIL alone. Plymouth City Council offered 50% match for selected projects.

3. It provides a simple mechanism for assessing projects and paying funds to the recipient.
4. It creates the opportunity to support projects which would not come forward through a traditional grant-making programme.
5. It allows a quick response to changing needs, without the requirement to change grant parameters.

Exeter Community Forum will approach providers of crowdfunding websites to identify a suitable partner. It will then develop and publicise a crowdfunding programme with one of them, with the following features:

1. Any emerging or existing community-led organisation in Exeter may publicise an initiative through the website.
2. Support will be available for people with limited access to, or skills in using, the internet.
3. Exeter Community Forum will publicise, from time to time, the types of projects it will consider supporting.
4. Exeter Community Forum will review newly listed projects, and assess them against its criteria, to decide whether to pledge match funding.
5. Exeter Community Forum will pledge x% match funding for selected projects up to a maximum (initially £x).

7.3   Increasing the scale of delivery

The amount of money available to the strategy from CIL is limited, and may well vary considerably from the initial projection. As described in this plan the funds will be used in a particular way to stimulate and support community action to meet unmet need in communities, especially, but not exclusively, those affect by development. These funds will not replace other funds nor be the only source of funding available to communities.

To sustain the planned level of delivery, and ideally to increase it, it will be necessary to secure investment from other sources. This will be done in three ways:

1. By securing investment from partners, working with Exeter City Council and other agencies to identify other funding which can be used to deliver the strategy. Some of this might be direct investment, such as New Homes Bonus money. More is likely to be indirect, such as where an existing partner programme can be adjusted to help deliver community objectives, or its investment can be shown as match in a funding proposal.

    Councillor grants (both Exeter City and Devon County) have a particularly important role to play as councillors have a very strong understanding of community needs within their wards. They can provide the seed money needed for new initiatives, which may then grow and move onto seeking funding under this strategy.

2. By securing investment from communities. This might come from individuals or community organisations pledging investment, directly or through, for example, crowdfunding described above.

3. By securing investment from beyond Exeter. Some of this might also come from crowd-funding, where an Exeter-based project captures the imagination of people further afield. Some might come from helping community organisations secure grant funding from Reaching Communities or other funders. Another source will be philanthropic giving, through which wealthy individuals will be

encouraged to match community funds, particularly for projects with charitable objectives (and so attract gift aid).

The outputs will be:

1. x direct investment secured additional to CIL.
2. x community investment secured per year, and
3. x investment secured from beyond Exeter.

8 8.   2019 and beyond

During the first three years, and following a review of progress, Exeter Community Forum and its partners will develop an action plan for 2019-2022. This will have the following features, among others:

1. A greater emphasis than the first action plan on comparatively high cost initiatives, such as new community buildings, or major green space projects,
2. Supporting community-led service delivery.

As part of developing this action plan, the feasibility of developing a long-term capital fund will be examined.

9 9.   Decision-making criteria

A community-led approach to development requires that communities have a role in deciding the criteria for the allocation of funding for community activities. In recognition of this, participants in the community events were asked to identify and prioritise the criteria they would like to see adopted. The results are shown in the chart which forms Figure 2.

The chart shows that the five most important criteria, in order, were:

1. The neighbourhood has great unmet need.
2. The location is particularly affected by development.
3. The project improves the environment and green spaces.
4. The project has strong community support.
5. The project helps groups of people, for example older or younger people.

Other criteria must also be taken into account in decision-making on funding, and these include:
6. Fit to the legal requirements for expenditure of neighbourhood CIL. The relevant parameters are wide.
7. Fit to the Exeter Community Forum strategy, and ability to contribute to its vision, priorities and suggestions for their delivery.
8. Reflects particular needs of the community where the project will take place.

These criteria will be taken into account in all the delivery programmes described above.

Figure 2: ECS Criteria for Assessing Proposals: Prioritisation by participants in community events

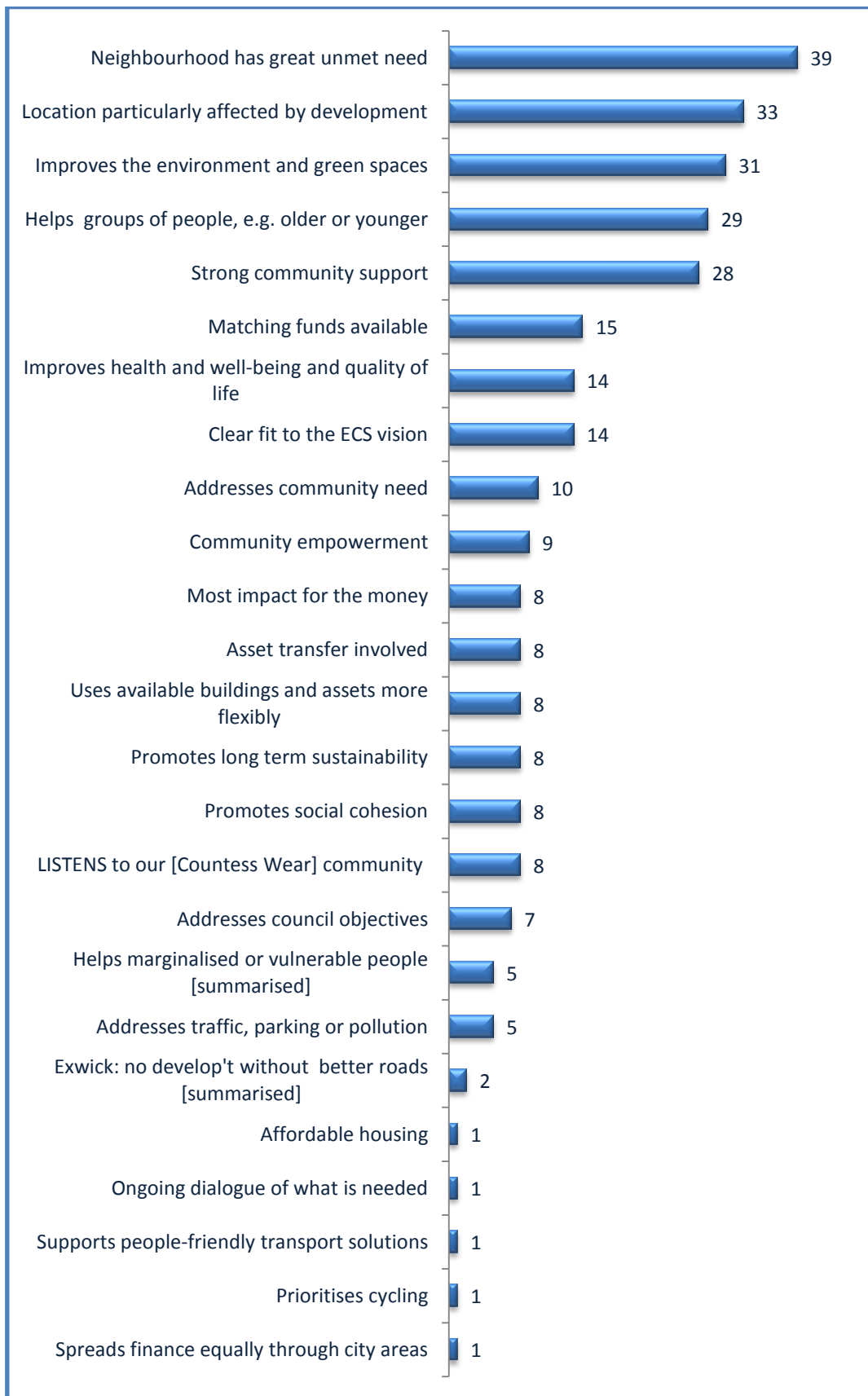| Criterion	Value
Neighbourhood has great unmet need	39
Location particularly affected by development	33
Improves the environment and green spaces	31
Helps groups of people, e.g. older or younger	29
Strong community support	28
Matching funds available	15
Improves health and well-being and quality of life	14
Clear fit to the ECS vision	14
Addresses community need	10
Community empowerment	9
Most impact for the money	8
Asset transfer involved	8
Uses available buildings and assets more flexibly	8
Promotes long term sustainability	8
Promotes social cohesion	8
LISTENS to our [Countess Wear] community	8
Addresses council objectives	7
Helps marginalised or vulnerable people [summarised]	5
Addresses traffic, parking or pollution	5
Exwick: no develop't without better roads [summarised]	2
Affordable housing	1
Ongoing dialogue of what is needed	1
Supports people-friendly transport solutions	1
Prioritises cycling	1
Spreads finance equally through city areas	1

Note: The numbers indicate the relative support for each criterion.