

For the attention of: Will Pratt

Exeter Transport Strategy – Consultation Draft
Devon County Council
Transport Planning
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Our ref: PE/dmv

Your ref:

4 March 2019

Dear Will

EXETER TRANSPORT STRATEGY – CONSULTATION DRAFT – JANUARY 2019

The City Council believes that the existing Exeter Transport Strategy, as set out in the LTP 3, needs to be updated to address the significant challenges of accommodating the growth to be provided for in the forthcoming Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP). The City Council believes the new Strategy needs to look to the 2040 GESP timeframe, albeit that a shorter timeframe may be appropriate for 'Local Transport Plan' purposes.

The City Council concurs that the key themes identified in the Consultation Draft Exeter Transport Strategy are the right ones, and that the overall thrust of the Transport Strategy is apposite. It articulates a credible strategy to address the continued growth of the City, but it must be complemented by costed infrastructure investment commitments, and the determination to see those investments implemented.

The City Council acknowledges that in previous years the County Council has worked hard to achieve modal shift to sustainable modes of travel in Exeter, and that the County Council have done remarkably well in capturing funding for transport infrastructure in the Greater Exeter area.

Looking to the future, there is a danger that future growth will outstrip the capacity of infrastructure within the City to accommodate it, and that a lack of capital funding for projects to accommodate growth will compound current problems. The City Council believes that mechanisms must be found by which the County Council is able to borrow money against the future financial benefits that flow from growth in the City and on its periphery to deliver transport infrastructure upfront in the City and on its fringes. Capacity freed up by modal shift in the City cannot simply be filled up by vehicular movement resulting from new growth elsewhere in Greater Exeter or in Exeter's Travel To Work Area, and we cannot simply rely on national funding to deliver critical infrastructure, we must find ways to pool resources, capture the value of development, and agree on shared transport infrastructure delivery priorities. The way that infrastructure is delivered in places like Greater Norwich may be a model we can follow. Under the terms of the Greater Norwich Growth Deal, Norfolk County Council borrowed £60 million from the Public Works Loans Board at discounted interest rates to deliver infrastructure upfront to accommodate growth.

The City Council believes that the time for radical change is upon us, that a step change is needed to encourage people to opt for sustainable travel modes in preference to the car, and that past

prevarication about what needs to be done cannot continue. The City Council believes that there is public support for putting pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users first, with the overall objective of improving the human environment and thereby the human experience of living in Exeter. The historic road network in the City is a major constraint that is not easily surmountable, and choices have to be made.

The City Council believes investment must be made in Park and Ride, in railway stations and rail services, and in innovative 'last mile' solutions offering Exeter's citizens and in-commuters choices in how they access work, education, and the services and facilities on offer in the City. We have to tackle stubborn problems like Park and Ride at Alphington. Government must be convinced that the local rail network functions as a commuting service and not just a leisure service for the rest of the country. The local rail network must increasingly be seen as an integral part of the growing Travel To Work Area. Whilst some investment in the Strategic Road Network may be unavoidable, this cannot be at the expense of investment in sustainable transport to accommodate movement in and out of the City.

The City Council strongly supports the need to further reduce the dominance of the car in the City Centre and other locations by removing traffic and re-dedicating highway space for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists. This will be fundamental to Exeter accommodating further growth and to areas on the periphery of the City accommodating more growth without giving rise to increased congestion and pollution in more central areas. Removing exceedances of the air quality objectives is properly included as a specific aim of the Strategy. Modelling by the City Council has indicated the extent of the changes in emissions which will be required to achieve this, as presented in our Air Quality Action Plan. The County Council must make use of this evidence to ensure that schemes are designed from the outset with an understanding of the scale of change required and I know that City Council officers are ready to assist with this process.

The re-dedication of highway space will need to be accompanied by significant investment to encourage both the citizens of Exeter and in-commuters out of their cars. In encouraging and facilitating an increase in travel by active modes by City residents, the strategy and interventions that flow from it must also target the travel behaviour of in-commuters. The Park and Ride / Park and Change element of the Transport Strategy must be accompanied by enhancements to all major corridors on radial routes. Enhancing just one or two of these corridors will not be sufficient. Enhancement and expansion of 'Devon Metro' rail services will also be critical. This will require further investment in new and enhanced railway stations (and associated infrastructure) in Exeter and Greater Exeter. The Strategy notes that the number of jobs in the Sowton area equals that in the City Centre but that rates of car commuting to Sowton are higher. Measures must also be put in place which allow out-commuters from the City to Sowton and other areas to utilise sustainable travel modes. Business journeys during the day within the City must also not simply be regarded as 'captive to the car or commercial vehicle'.

Complementary measures to dis-incentivise in-commuting by private vehicle should not be ruled out too soon. In-commuters must be given both choices and incentives to shift to different transport modes so that congestion and pollution do not simply continue to be the norm in the City.

Embryonic concepts such as electric buses, on demand shuttles from Park and Ride sites to key employment sites, electric bike schemes and car clubs need to be further trialled and their expansion facilitated.

Exeter City Futures can be a conduit for bringing about innovative change. The Council is committed to becoming one of the UK's most sustainable Cities, and through our shared membership of Exeter City Futures we should be aspiring to the creation of a city where residents, commuters and visitors can access the City through green options that maximise clean air and space for walking, cycling and public transport.

Clear commitments need to be made to implement the infrastructure which is identified as being necessary to accommodate growth. Transport plans which follow on from the Transport Strategy will need to marry up with housing and economic development plans. The City Council is excited to be working with the County Council and others to produce an Exeter Infrastructure Prospectus with the support of the National Infrastructure Commission. Perhaps the most important element of this will be the identification of transport project implementation timeframes and associated finance. Both the City and County Councils need to use the National Infrastructure Commission Case Study to identify the scale of funding required to support the growth of the City.

To summarise, the City Council supports the overall thrust of the Consultation Draft Exeter Transport Strategy. The City Council believes the need for radical change is now unavoidable. The Transport Strategy must be complemented by definite implementation plans, informed by the collaborative work to be undertaken with the support of the National Infrastructure Commission, and by other initiatives such as the Sport England physical activity local delivery pilot programme.

I have, of course, a vested interest in promoting Exeter's interests, but I genuinely believe that investment in Exeter must be a priority. The City is key to raising productivity across the Heart of the South West Region and across the far south west of England in general. In the productivity context, investment in Exeter is not a selfish demand, it's a sensible proposition that benefits everyone in the City's expansive Travel To Work Area.

The City Council looks forward to working with the County Council to achieve the best outcomes we can for Exeter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Edwards', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr Peter Edwards
Leader, Exeter City Council

