

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP
28 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**EXECUTIVE
28 SEPTEMBER 2010**

MASTERPLAN FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NEWCOURT

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Members may recall the papers at Planning Member Working Group, Planning Committee and Executive in February 2010 which explained the purpose and detailed content of the draft Masterplan and obtained Member approval for use of the draft Masterplan for development management purposes and for consultation.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the outcomes of the public consultation on the draft Masterplan, to seek approval for its use for Development Management purposes (superceding the previous draft) and for its future adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Newcourt area, delineated in red 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.
- 2.2 The Masterplan is prepared for the Newcourt Strategic Allocation proposed in the Exeter Core Strategy Submission draft. The Core Strategy identified this area as delivering 2300 additional new dwellings and 16 hectares of employment land and associated infrastructure and including a gypsy and traveller site.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

3 CHANGING POLICY POSITION

- 3.1 Following revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the government has advised that local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land. The Exeter Core Strategy Submission Draft makes provision for 12,000 dwelling in the City in the period 2006-2026 and sets out how the strategic allocation areas of Monkerton & Hill Barton, Newcourt and Alphington are central to the delivery of this strategy. However, that document cannot provide detailed guidance. There is significant developer interest in bringing forward development and there is therefore also a need to provide guidance for development in the short term.
- 3.2 The government has further advised that the abolition of Regional Strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of Gypsy and Traveller site provision and that they should continue to do this in line with current policy. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) will form a good starting point for establishing site requirements. Whilst a replacement of Circular 01/06: Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites is anticipated, it is not expected to depart significantly from the above stated approach of the current government as set out at section 3.1.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft Masterplan was subject of a six week public consultation that ran from 1 March until 12 April 2010. The consultation documents were made available in the local and central libraries, at the Civic Centre and were available to view and download from the City Councils website. The consultation was advertised by notice in the Express & Echo and a front page article in the Exeter Citizen which is delivered to all households and advised of the details of two staffed exhibition sessions, held on a Saturday and a weekday evening. Stakeholders and persons who have registered on the consultation database were advised by email or letter.
- 4.2 A total of 62 written responses were received and a table summarising them, and our response to the points that were raised, is available on request.
- 4.3 Setting aside responses with regards the location of a Gypsy and Traveller Site which are dealt with in section 5 below, the most commonly raised objections (and the Council's responses to them) were:

i) Residential densities are too high.

Higher densities are important in maximising public transport use and the economic prospects for community energy networks – both are essential in moving towards a zero carbon future. Other benefits include making efficient use of land, preventing the need for further greenfield sites to be developed and in providing viable and well used local facilities. A strong emphasis is placed on providing development within a strong green infrastructure framework to ensure an attractive and healthy environment is created.

The Core Strategy emphasises the importance of achieving the highest appropriate levels of density in order to achieve sustainable development that supports public transport and low carbon energy infrastructure. Whilst the density requirements may no longer be stipulated by the region, the arguments for encouraging higher densities remain. Great care needs to be taken to ensure this is achieved without adversely affecting the quality of places.

The Newcourt Masterplan sets out the general principles for development in the Newcourt area and sets density targets. However, development will be considered in light of all local planning policy guidance including design and open space standards. The Council are currently preparing a Residential Design Guide which will raise design standards in residential schemes and which sets standards for minimum garden and room sizes.

ii) Effect on highway network.

The Council is working with the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point, Devon County Council and others to ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken in respect of growth to the east of Exeter. The Exeter and East Devon Infrastructure Study and the Green Infrastructure Strategy assess how the proposed growth may be accommodated and identify the measures required, including future infrastructural requirements, to mitigate its impact. Devon County Council is also updating the Local Transport Plan and preparing Access Strategies for growth to the east of the city. The Masterplan's strong emphasis on sustainable forms of transport should help to mitigate the impact of the development on local roads. The Local Highways Authority will assess all planning applications received to ensure the impact of development on the road network is acceptable.

In order to create a sustainable urban extension, and to mitigate the impact of the development on air quality and local roads, the Masterplan puts a strong emphasis on designing a place that is well served by public transport and provides a range of alternatives to travelling by car. In addition, the proposed road layout on the development will be designed to reduce permeability for cars and to discourage car travel to the City Centre.

Accesses will need to be designed in such a way as to satisfy the Local Highway Authority at Devon County Council that levels of visibility and highway safety are of an acceptable standard. Further detailed consideration will be given to this matter once detailed proposals are submitted through a planning application.

5 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE SELECTION

- 5.1 The three site location options presented in the Masterplan consultation were selected for consultation by applying the site requirements and the Core Strategy criteria to the land within the Masterplan boundaries.
- 5.2 The points raised in the responses to the consultation have been considered, and the three options have been scored against the suitability criteria set out in the Core Strategy Proposed Submission.
- 5.3 Of the 62 consultation responses received 31 included points relating to the siting of a Gypsy and Traveller site and of those 23 raised objection in principle to the inclusion of a Gypsy and Traveller site in this area. Of the small number of respondents who differentiated between sites, three objections were made to site 1, while sites 2 and 3 received both support and objections.
- 5.4 The sites were also scored against the site selection criteria set out in the Core Strategy Proposed Submission. This scoring is set out in Appendix C.
- 5.5 Development in the area of sites near Sandy Park (No. 1) and east of St. Bridget Nurseries (No.2) were considered unsuitable without improvements to access so that this could be delivered from the A379 rather than Old Rydon Lane. Access to services is currently poor.
- 5.6 The site on the north side of Topsham Road adjacent the Topsham FC football ground (consultation site 3) scored well against the site selection criteria in that safe and convenient access could be provided from Topsham Road directly or as a spur from the new access road. The opportunity to site north of the football club and access between the football club and the motorway can also be explored. The site is removed from existing dwellings, which is considered to make it more equitable. The closest dwellings Newport Park are on the south side of Topsham Road.
- 5.7 The site on the north side of Topsham Road adjacent the Topsham FC football ground (consultation site 3) has been selected to be included in the Masterplan. This selection was arrived at in consultation with the All Party Member Working Group in accordance with the process agreed by the Planning Member Working Group in 2008. This location is shown in the Masterplan extract attached as Appendix B.

6 AMENDMENTS

- 6.1 In addition to the inclusion of the location of a Gypsy and Traveller site the amendments to the Masterplan following consultation include:
 - Amendments to update the planning policy background.
 - Proposals for community uses on the middle depot site have been removed.

- Possibility of co-locating some community facilities with primary schools allowed for.
- The provision of additional local retail in the southern part of the area has been allowed for.
- Land shown for residential land under the electricity lines has been removed. Encouragement to explore potential alterations to the electricity lines has been added.
- Further advice on archaeology has been included.

7 ADVICE SOUGHT/RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That Planning Member Working Group supports the use of the Masterplan for Development Management purposes and for its future adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 7.2 That Executive agrees the use of the Masterplan for Development Management purposes and for its future adoption as a 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