

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP
28 SEPTEMBER 2010****EXECUTIVE
28 SEPTEMBER 2010****TEIGNBRIDGE: ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:
EAST DEVON: PREFERRED OPTIONS: CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS ON CORE
STRATEGY****1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To formulate a response to the consultation documents recently published by Teignbridge District Council and East Devon District Council as part of their ongoing Core Strategy preparation.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 These adjoining authorities are moving towards the submission of their Core Strategies and are seeking the views of the general public and stakeholders as to the most appropriate options for growth over the next twenty years or so. Whilst each authority is at a slightly different stage of plan preparation many of the strategic arguments, spatial issues and indeed interdependence between the authorities make it appropriate to consider the two documents together. Teignbridge is consulting on a range of possible options and strategies whilst East Devon has selected a "Preferred Strategy" for consultation. Members will be aware that a close working relationship exists at both officer and member level between the three authorities and a considerable amount of joint working has been done by the authorities including growth point work and the preparation of a joint master plan study for south west Exeter. The City Council have been consulted on earlier stages of plan preparation by both authorities. Under the present legislation there will be further opportunities to make representations on the later stages of plan preparation of both authorities.
- 2.2 The revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) presently leaves a gap in the strategic planning background to all Core Strategy preparation including the two consultation documents. The evidence base and work done during the preparation of the RSS remains a valid and material consideration however and items such as the issues and objectives for the sub region remain as corporately derived and pertinent background to the preparation of these two documents and to the preparation of the Exeter Core Strategy.
- 2.3 The draft RSS published in 2006 at policy SR17 sets out the importance that the growth of Exeter has for the sub region and it says: "Devon County Council, Exeter City, East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Councils should plan for the balanced growth of Exeter maximising the use of previously developed land and buildings, making provision for urban extensions, for mixed use development and to meet the longer term needs. This will require continued co-operation particularly at cross boundary locations." Whilst policy SR17 and its successor policies in later versions of the RSS will no longer have any statutory relevance it does reflect the reality of the situation in the sub region in that the economic prosperity of the sub region is inexorably linked to the growth of the City and that such growth is now and will increasingly in the future, be dependant upon policies adopted in adjoining

authorities.

- 2.4 Both of these consultation documents and indeed work done previously by all three councils recognise the need to ensure the balanced growth of Exeter. The passing of the RSS, with its prescriptive growth levels and its locational imperatives, has not been mourned by many local authorities who welcome the freedom the localism agenda has given to decide for themselves the appropriate scale and location of growth within their own areas. The utility of the RSS was that it provided a strategic vision and to some extent, prescribed a co-ordinated and (arguably in some instances) appropriate approach to problems and policies which crossed local authority boundaries. The challenge for the City Council (in the absence of any replacement strategic plan or body) with regard to spatial planning policies adopted by adjoining local authorities will be to ensure that they are of a scale, and in an appropriate location to deliver the balanced growth; including the necessary infrastructure, that the City and sub region needs. At the same time it will be important to recognise the adjoining authorities' right to determine the spatial priorities that they deem meet the needs of their communities.

3 TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL :CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Teignbridge District Council published the above document for public consultation on 29 June for a 10 week period ending on 10 September (it has been agreed a late representation from the City Council will be considered). The document is relatively lengthy and is not reproduced below but a copy may be seen in Forward Planning section and is available to view on Teignbridge's website at teignbridge.limehouse.co.uk/portal/core_strategy/cs_options.
- 3.2 In terms of Core Strategy preparation Teignbridge are at a relatively early stage and, in the light of the revocation of the RSS, have decided to consult the public on a range of options and strategies to meet the perceived growth required over the next twenty years or so. Teignbridge have not specifically taken the period 2006 to 2026 as set out in the RSS for the purpose of the consultation.
- 3.3 The early parts of the consultation document are taken up with possible options on what might be termed the less controversial subjects such as climate change, green infrastructure and sustainable construction. Generally these options are in line with policies adopted by most local authorities and the finer details for options on these subjects are matters best left to Teignbridge to decide. In terms of additional growth, particularly housing growth, Teignbridge has historically welcomed relatively high growth levels as a way of sustaining, improving and maintaining the prosperity of the District in particular the role played by Newton Abbot. In respect of additional housing development the document postulates that a figure of around 740 housing completions per annum would seem to be the appropriate level of growth; a figure broadly in line with completions rates set out in the final version of the RSS but significantly higher than the rate of about 300 houses per annum that which has taken place in the past.
- 3.4 Future employment growth is seen as largely taking place in Newton Abbot with additional employment in sustainable locations to support other towns and villages. There is an expressed desire to reduce out commuting throughout the District and to allocate additional employment land in Newton Abbot as one step towards this objective.
- 3.5 The consultation document then seeks to assess the likely issues and options of the general strategies by settlements. The most pertinent for Exeter is the area

called “Edge of Exeter” this section of the document begins by recognising the part that Exeter plays within the sub region and states:

- “Exeter is a key economic driver for the region and a major Regional Centre for services, retailing and culture. It has high economic prospects, with a growing knowledge based economy, including the University and Met Office, as well as proposed developments at Science Park and Sky Park. The economic success of Exeter is vital to the region as a whole and Teignbridge residents in particular. It is therefore, relevant to consider how the Core Strategy this success.”

3.6 The “Key Issue” identified in respect of this “settlement” is seen as the need to support Exeter’s growth and the section states: “The Council (meaning Teignbridge Council) can play an important role in supporting the City’s growth and function by identifying opportunities to provide sustainable growth within the Teignbridge Plan area boundary”. Reference is then made to the South West Exeter Area Action Plan which emerged in part from work that is jointly funded; into the master planning exercise for this area which remains ongoing. Members commented on the initial stages of this Action Plan in PWMG in January 2010, (when it was published as a separate Issues and Options document) to emphasise the importance of following a zero carbon approach to development of this area and to request the continuation of full consultation and joint working in the area. Other key issues in this section relate to the transport infrastructure required, the amount of housing growth, the need for new jobs and community facilities and the need to mitigate environmental risks.

3.7 The concluding part of the key issues section looks at alternative options for providing the growth in this area. Three options are mentioned, these being:

- A single urban extension around Alphington
- Dispersal of growth along the fringes of the City
- Additions to existing settlements such as Exminster, Ide, Shillingford Abbot and Alphington

At this stage it is difficult to be definitive as to which of these three options offers the best alternative for the future growth of Exeter in this location since the work has not been done in any great detail to look into the second and third options, it would probably also be simplistic to view these options as mutually exclusive. Once again however the work done in preparation for the RSS can assist in forming an opinion together with the work the two authorities have done for the master planning exercise. Given the infrastructure requirements linked to growth in this area, not least those relating to education and transport, it is believed that the most sustainable form of development and probably the most deliverable would be a single urban extension; the conclusion reached formerly in the RSS.

3.8 The latter part of the consultation document looks at the way the housing growth might be distributed around Teignbridge District and has alternative strategies of “Balanced Distribution”, “Heart of Teignbridge Focus” (a concentration around Newton Abbot), “Exeter Facing” (a larger concentration of housing adjoining the border with Exeter) and “Coastal and Rural Dispersal”, (a greater concentration of growth in Dawlish Teignmouth and Bovey Tracey). The distribution of housing throughout the District is probably a decision to be left to the Members and communities within Teignbridge, the important thing to note from Exeter’s perspective however is that all of the growth strategies have significant amounts of additional housing on the fringes of Exeter ranging from 1750 over a 20 year period to 4000 in the Exeter Facing option. These figures compare with the 2000 house

urban extension mentioned in the final version of the RSS.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXETER

4.1 The recognition by this adjoining authority that they have a part to play in the balanced growth of Exeter and its importance in the sub regional context is to be welcomed. There are four questions that perhaps need to be addressed by both Councils. These being:

- Should the principle of Exeter's growth to the south west be reaffirmed?
- What scale should this growth be?
- What is the most appropriate location for such growth?
- What form should it take, is a single urban extension the most appropriate form for any additional growth?

The most useful starting point to determine these issues remains the work done in preparation for the RSS and subsequent studies carried out individually by Teignbridge and the City Council in preparation of their Core Strategies. It is now almost universally accepted that Exeter's growth in the future can only really be to the east or south of the City. All the evidence base for the RSS confirms this as does the City Council's own Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study. All three versions of the RSS had a southern "Area of Search" to accommodate additional growth with the levels of this growth also increasing from 500 houses originally to 2500 houses in a predominantly south western area in the Secretary of State's Proposed changes version.

4.2 The land to the south or south west of Exeter has clearly been identified as a possible location for the future growth of Exeter along with the more easterly "area of search" discussed later in this report when talking about possible future development in East Devon District. Possible growth in the south west provides a balance to the growth that may take place in the eastern area and it provides alternative options for timing of delivery mechanisms and implementation. The precise scale and location of growth may require additional study including completion of the master plan but the revocation of the RSS also gives greater freedom to decide such issues at a local level. As regards the form any growth should take certain basic principles can at this stage point to the more favoured option. These may be summarised as:

- Larger areas of comprehensive new development can provide economies of scale in relation to the provision of infrastructure, including transportation, education and community infrastructure and physical infrastructure such as roads, drainage and services.

Any growth taking place in south west Exeter should also so far as possible be complimentary to the proposed strategic allocation for 500 houses in Alphington set out in the proposed Exeter Core Strategy.

5 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

5.1 The City Council welcomes the recognition in the Issues and Alternative Option document of the need for Teignbridge District Council to support the balanced growth of Exeter. The City Council would like this need to be specifically reflected in the Key Issues facing the District Council.

The City Council would support the option of additional housing employment and retail growth in that part of Teignbridge adjoining the south western boundary of Exeter. The City Council believes that the scale and location of such growth should await the results of more detailed work including the completion of the south west Exeter master planning exercise. The City Council however believes that a single strategic allocation may represent the most sustainable form of development. The City Council at this stage does not favour the dispersal of growth option along the City boundary but would also support additional growth at settlements such as Exminster that have a range of basic infrastructure, if such development was thought appropriate

The City Council recognises the importance of joint working and co-operation on matters of strategic spatial planning and hope that Teignbridge District Council maintain the present close and co-operative working arrangements that exist between the two authorities.

6 EAST DEVON CORE STRATEGY: PREFERRED APPROACH

6.1 East Devon published this document on 6 September for a 12 week consultation period it is one stage further on in terms of Core Strategy preparation than the Teignbridge document in that the East Devon Council have selected a preferred approach to dealing with growth over the next 20 years. It is this approach rather than alternative options that is now the subject of consultation. The City Council commented on the earlier stages of plan preparation in February 2009 and January 2010. In these earlier responses the City Council expressed no preference for any of the alternative strategies being put forward save to express the view that a low/zero carbon strategy was important and that the sustainability advantages of an expanded Cranbrook might outweigh the risks of being reliant on one location to deliver housing. These earlier responses were made at a time however when in reality the options open to East Devon were limited due to the prescriptive nature of the emerging RSS. Whilst in theory the consultation document now published consults on only one strategy, should the response from the public consultation be such as to convince Members that an alternative strategy should be adopted, they would be free to do so without the constraints of the RSS strategic overview. It is considered important therefore for the City Council to respond fully to emphasise the approach that is felt to offer the best prospects for the balanced growth of Exeter. The consultation document is very lengthy and is not reproduced here but is available together with a useful Executive Summary on the East Devon website. A copy is also available in the Forward Planning section.

6.2 Members will be aware that a considerable degree of joint working and co-operation exists between the City Council and East Devon District Council. Implicit in this spirit of co-operation is the acceptance that the authorities are to some extent dependant upon each other for their respective prosperity and economic well being. The Vision for East Devon set out in the consultation document recognises this interdependence when it states. "East Devon will play its part in boosting the economy of the Exeter sub region by encouraging significant growth within the West End of the District through:

- Allocating Cranbrook a prototype eco town new community, plus an urban extension east of Exeter;
- Promoting the Exeter Science Park, Skypark, a multi modal rail freight depot and the expansion of Exeter Airport, encouraging high technology industries and opening our market towns and coastal communities to the latest technological innovations;

- Facilitating the change to a low carbon economy and supporting an advance public transport system to connect the main employment with established and new communities.”

6.3 Much of the background detail in the preferred approach document centres around the previous debates as to how much development should be located in the West End of the District as opposed to distributed throughout the remainder of the district, a sub text of this debate was seen to be the optimal or acceptable size of the new town proposal for Cranbrook. The preferred approach however identifies the size of the growth in the West End of the District as being:

- Cranbrook 5000 houses and 14 hectares of employment land (2900 of these houses are already committed)
- Pinhoe 800 houses and 3 hectares of employment
- North of Blackhorse 2,200 houses and 9 hectares of employment
- The establishment of SkyPark, 50 hectares of employment
- The establishment of Science Park, 25 hectares of employment
- The expansion of Exeter Airport and 5 hectares of employment
- The establishment of the Multi Modal Interchange
- The expansion of Exeter Airport Business Park to give an additional 5 hectares of employment

A plan attached as Appendix 1 gives more detail of the general directions of growth in the preferred option.

The rest of the document sets out what are seen as appropriate growth levels for other towns and villages in the District and has relatively uncontroversial chapters on issues such as climate change green infrastructure and sustainable development.

7 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXETER

7.1 There can be little doubt that the balanced expansion of Exeter requires additional development in and around the land adjoining the eastern boundary of the City; this location for additional development would tie in with the strategic allocations at Monkerton and Newcourt set out in the Exeter Core Strategy. There are also significant infrastructure and sustainable development advantages and benefits to be secured with a comprehensive development in this location. This area for growth has its genesis as far back as the County Structure Plan and has remained a constant theme throughout the work carried out for the RSS the latest version giving a figure of 11,500 as being the requirement for this area with 7,500 of these being in Cranbrook. As in Teignbridge, the precise scale and location of this additional development will be dependant in part upon more detailed work still to be carried out. A substantial and sustainable development in the West End of East Devon District is therefore of fundamental importance in the future growth of the City and should be supported as a concept by the City Council.

8 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

8.1 The City Council welcomes the implicit recognition in the preferred option document of the need to support the balanced growth of Exeter for the benefit of the sub region. The City Council believes that this objective should be stated more explicitly as part of the vision for East Devon. The City Council also welcomes and supports the preferred option to promote substantial development in the “West End” of the District and would urge that such growth should be maximised in

accordance with the principles of sustainable development, infrastructure provision and deliverability. The City Council would wish to continue to participate in joint working to produce a co-ordinated and comprehensive development to the east of Exeter.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT/RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That Planning Member Working Group is asked to note and support this report which will form the basis of the response to Teignbridge and East Devon District Councils.

- 9.2 That Executive is asked to agree the proposed response to Teignbridge District Council set out in paragraph 5.1 and the response to East Devon District Council outlined in paragraph 8.1.

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

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None