

# EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE  
23 NOVEMBER 2010

## MASTERPLAN FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF NEWCOURT

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Members will recall the meeting of the Executive in September which approved the Newcourt Masterplan for Development Management purposes and in due course as a Supplementary Planning Document, but deferred approval of the location for the Gypsy and Travellers site. A copy of the report to that meeting is attached here as Appendix C.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is re-present the consultation and responses thereto on the Newcourt Masterplan, to inform members of the further responses that have been received since the meeting of 28 September and the site visit of 26 October, and to seek approval for the inclusion of a location for a Gypsy and Travellers Site within the Masterplan.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Newcourt area, delineated on the plan attached 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 to support the Newcourt Strategic Allocation in the Exeter Core Strategy Proposed Submission. The Core Strategy identified this area as delivering 2300 additional new dwellings and 16 hectares of employment land and associated infrastructure including a gypsy and traveller site.
- 2.3 The Masterplan is based on 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 a planning application for development in the area could be determined.

2.5 A copy of the Masterplan figure is attached at Appendix B. The Masterplan, a table setting out the responses to the consultation and a copy of the further correspondence received since 28 September are available in the Members Room.

### **3 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The report to Executive of 28 September recommended that site 3, adjacent the Football Ground, be allocated in the Masterplan.

### **4 FURTHER RESPONSES RECEIVED**

- 4.1 At the time of writing a total of 294 letters of objection and 2 letters of support have been received since 28 September. A small number of these letters have included comments which are discriminatory in nature, these are not reported here. Exeter City Council is committed to the principle of racial equality. The following points were also made:
- 4.2 Local Authorities are no longer required to provide these sites.

The Housing Act 2004 and Planning Acts put in place a framework which requires every local authority to carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and identify in the development plan to meet that need. Whilst the coalition government has announced its intention to replace the existing guidance in Circular (01/2006) this will be replaced with new guidance setting out councils' statutory responsibilities in this area. The most recent advice from central government on this matter in July 2010 states that *"Local councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers. The abolition of the Regional Strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs (Development Plan Documents). They should continue to do this in line with current policy."* More recent ministerial statements have announced an intention to strengthen Local Authority powers to deal with unauthorised sites and at the same time to incentivise councils to provide more authorised sites where they are needed.

The principle of allocating sites through the development plan to meet the needs identified in the 2006 Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment will be tested at the Examination in Public of the Core Strategy

#### 4.3 Better sites should be found.

Exeter City Council has been through a process, agreed by elected members in 2008, seeking to identify suitable sites. A city-wide call for sites carried out in 2008 did not identify any suitable sites and, in the absence of suitable sites identified on surplus public sector land the City Council has sought to deliver sites within the strategic development allocations identified in the Core Strategy in accordance with the "Good Practice Guidance for Gypsy and Travellers sites" issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government in 2008.

Sites suggested by correspondence received since 28 September will receive consideration as part of a Local Development Framework Allocations Document preparation.

#### 4.4 Lack of consultation.

The Proposed Submission Core Strategy July 2010 sets out the vision, objectives and strategy for the spatial development of the City up to 2026. Core Strategy Policies CP6 and CP19 relate to the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites and this document can be found on the ECC website. The policy basis within the Core Strategy for assessing proposals for Gypsy and Travellers sites was first consulted on as part of the documents' preparation in 2006. The Principle of allocating the Monkerton & Hill Barton and Newcourt areas as strategic allocations to help meet housing, employment, Gypsy and Traveller pitch and other demands in the city for the period up to 2026 was consulted on as part of the Core Strategy preparation in 2009. Pre-submission representations were invited in July 2010.

The Examination in Public of the Core Strategy, which is anticipated to be held in spring 2011, will consider the policies therein and the evidence supporting those policies - including the overall G&T pitch requirements and the proposal that they should be included within the Strategic Allocations.

The Masterplans, which provide more detailed planning policy guidance for the Core Strategy Strategic Allocation areas, were the subject of formal consultation between 1st March and 12th April 2010. The consultation was carried out on the development of the area as a whole and not on its constituent parts. There was therefore no consultation relating to Gypsy and travellers sites in isolation but the issue of siting was put as a key issue within the consultation questions. A non-exhaustive list of three options was consulted on at that stage.

Should any planning application be received for development, including development of a Gypsy and Travellers Site, this would be advertised and representations invited in the usual manner.

#### 4.5 Reduction in house prices and impact on attractiveness of Newcourt area.

The effect on the value of land is not a consideration in the approval of this planning document. It is not considered that the siting of a small, managed, well designed Gypsy and Traveller site would adversely affect the attractiveness of the Newcourt Area to such a degree as to make development unviable.

#### 4.6 There is a lack of capacity of existing schools

The Newcourt Masterplan makes provision for two new primary schools and contribution to be made towards increasing the capacity of secondary schools.

#### 4.7 Fly-tipping will result

The provision of actively managed sites and the involvement of the site residents in management of communal areas within sites will reduce problems with waste and rubbish. Unlike unauthorised sites, authorised sites are served by a sewerage connection and by refuse collections.

#### 4.8 Health

The provision of authorised sites in locations with access to healthcare facilities will increase the ability of the Gypsy and Traveller Communities to access healthcare. The Newcourt Masterplan envisages provision being made for new Healthcare facilities within the Newcourt Area.

#### 4.9 Crime, noise and antisocial behaviour

The investigation of alleged crime is a matter for the police. The Police and Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers work with communities to tackle the myths and prejudices that exist in this regards. Anti-social behaviour can result in residents being evicted from authorised sites.

#### 4.10 Cost

Residents on authorised site are charged rent and are liable to pay council tax as appropriate.

The costs of dealing with unauthorised sites needs to be offset against the cost of provision of an authorised sites.

The decision before members at this stage is with regards adoption of a planning policy allocation of a site. Decisions with regards the delivery and management of a site are not being made at this stage. A number of different mechanisms for the delivery of Gypsy and Travellers sites exist.

More recent ministerial statements have announced an intention to financially incentivise councils to provide more authorised sites where they are needed. The details of that financial incentive are yet to be announced.

#### 4.11 Traffic generation and highway safety

The proposed Gypsy and Traveller site is within the area identified for development by the Core Strategy Strategic Allocation and on land that would otherwise be considered suitable for development. There is therefore not considered to be an increase in traffic generation through the provision of a Gypsy and Traveller Site of 12/13 pitches over or above that which would be generated by residential or employment development. The safety of any new access that may be proposed is a matter for consideration at detailed planning application stage.

#### 4.12 Impact on attractiveness of Topsham.

It is not considered that the siting of a small, managed, well designed Gypsy and Traveller site in the Newcourt area would adversely affect the amenity of Topsham.

#### 4.13 In support:

Travellers and Gypsies are subject to persecution. We should lead by example in accepting their way of life whilst rejecting the anti-social behaviour committed by a few. It is regrettable that there is so much opposition to the plan to help these people.

## **5 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE ALLOCATION**

- 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 were considered, and the three options were scored against the suitability criteria set out in the Core Strategy Proposed Submission. This scored assessment was attached to the report of 28 September.
- 5.3 Further to the meeting of 28 September and site visit of 26 October members have advised that they consider that of the Core Strategy criteria significantly more weight should be given to the 'protecting the amenity of adjacent occupiers' than other criteria and that the definition of 'adjacent occupiers' had been considered too narrowly in that assessment.
- 5.4 If a great deal of weight is placed on that particular criteria then site 2, on land to the east of St. Bridget Nurseries, would perform better than other sites when considered against the criteria as a whole as this has the fewest number of existing dwellings within its immediate surroundings.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 That Executive agrees that site 2 be included as the location for a Gypsy and Travellers site in the Newcourt Masterplan and the Masterplan thus amended be

approved for Development Management purposes in due course for 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