

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
6 DECEMBER 2011****A CITY CENTRE VISION FOR A GREEN CAPITAL****1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Members will recall the meeting of the Executive in June which resolved that the City Centre Vision document be approved for the purpose of a public engagement exercise with key stakeholders and, subject to the engagement, the use of the document be endorsed to inform decision-making by the City Council, specifically in relation to future City Centre Action Plan; and that the document be commended to Exeter Vision Partnership.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present the consultation and responses thereto and to seek approval for proposed changes to the document.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware of the progress that is being made on the LDF Core Strategy; following the adoption of the Core Strategy attention will turn to progressing local development documents including a possible City Centre Area Action Plan.
- 2.2 The development principles that will support a framework master plan for the Bus and Coach Station site will be reported shortly to Members. Progress on this project has been slower than advised to Members last year in large part due to the decision of the John Lewis Partnership in relation to 1-11 Sidwell Street. The John Lewis decision has major implications for the approach to the development of the site, and effectively work on the master planning has been delayed for the implications of the JLP decision to be assessed.
- 2.3 In January 2010 Scrutiny Committee considered a set of papers on the challenges facing the City in reducing carbon emissions over the next two decades. Specific attention was given to the City Centre and the role of planning and transport issues in addressing carbon emissions. Members recognised the City Centre performs a complex set of roles: economic, social, and residential, and as a transport hub; and if we are to accommodate the various pressures to create a satisfactory environment Members recognised the following key elements need to be delivered:
- o Sites for new jobs, housing and retail uses;
 - o Significantly intensified use of the Bus Station and Bus Depot sites through a comprehensive redevelopment;
 - o Effective opening up and investment in the cultural quarter;
 - o Rationalisation of the parking stock;
 - o Major enhancement of the gateways for passengers at Central Station and St David's Station;

- o Improved facilities for pedestrians in the city centre principal shopping streets and increased priority for public transport vehicles;
 - o Elimination of City Centre vehicle movement in all the principal shopping streets, except for public transport vehicles; and
 - o The creation of a series of new pedestrian spaces in the City Centre.
- 2.4 In addressing some of the key principles, such as creating a civilised City Centre with pedestrian dominated spaces and limiting cross centre vehicular movement, such as created in Princesshay; there was recognition that there was no clear vision for the City Centre that could assist decision makers in grappling with specific issues and site specific interventions. A long term vision for the City Centre should drive the traffic management strategy rather than vice versa. Accordingly, officers of the City Council and County Council working with LDA Design prepared a visioning document for the City Centre. Explicitly the work has been commissioned to: Provide a development context for a City Centre Transportation Strategy and other potential studies and projects in the City Centre; and form the basis of a vision for any future City Centre Action Area Plan.
- 2.5 The City Centre Vision document is split into two distinct components:
- o A number of framework principles help to bring out and build on those elements that are, or could be, memorable and great about Exeter; and
 - o four big moves or area development projects that represent one way of achieving change within this framework over the coming years to achieve the ambitions of a prosperous and growing city.
- 2.6 The draft document was presented to Members of the Executive on 21 June 2011 at which time it was resolved that the contents of the City Centre Vision document be approved for the purpose of a public engagement exercise with key stakeholders and, subject to the engagement, the use of the document be endorsed to inform decision-making by the City Council, specifically in relation to any future City Centre Action Plan; and the document was commended to Exeter Vision Partnership

3 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPATION

- 3.1 Consultation on the City Centre Vision document consisted of a number of events through the summer and early autumn of 2011 targeted at the public and stakeholders, accompanied by a survey. Written submissions were also welcomed.
- 3.2 A display of explanatory material was made available on the ECC website and in the Civic Centre during July, August and September; copies of the full document were available through both. The events and survey/feedback form were also promoted via coverage in the Express & Echo and on the front page of the Council website. Invitations to the events were sent out to stakeholder groups, those on the planning consultation database and other contact lists.
- 3.3 Consultation events were scheduled for a variety of times and dates, to allow the maximum number of people to engage.

- Two 'roadshow' events in Bedford Square (Friday 8th and Saturday 9th July)
- Community Forum at the Corn Exchange (evening, Wednesday 13th July)
- Two briefing sessions (evening 1st September, morning 2nd September)

3.4 Survey/feedback form

A short survey was sent by post to stakeholders and contacts. The survey was also made available online via the website and promoted via the roadshow events. In total there were 133 responses with 107 coming online and 26 on paper. The survey was intended to gauge support for the broad concept of the Vision document, the 17 Principles and the four Big Moves. The survey form was weighted towards written comments with just two qualitative questions and two other questions which could be broken down numerically. Demographic data shows large number of respondents aged under 16 (44 respondents, 32% of total). This is very unusual. From other information supplied by these respondents it would appear that a group of students at West Exe Technology College have completed the online version. Although it is encouraging that these students have taken part, it should be noted that the overall results may be skewed towards their particular demographic (age and area of city).

3.5 Roadshows

Two roadshow events were held in Bedford Square on Friday July 8 and Saturday July 9. A shortened version of the document was presented on display boards, covering the 17 Principles and the four Big Moves. Staff from Planning, Economy & Development and Communications were on hand, along with the City Centre Manager, to talk to the public about the document. Members of the public were encouraged to complete the survey form (see above for analysis) and invited to attend the Community Forum which took place the following week (July 13). In all, an estimated 200+ people came to the roadshows. The event was also covered in the Express & Echo.

3.6 Community Forum

A Community Forum was held on the evening of July 13 at the Corn Exchange, chaired by Peter Lacey from the Exeter Vision Partnership. The format was a short presentation by Karime Hassan, Director for Economy & Development followed by breakout discussion groups led by officers from ECC and Devon County Council. The discussion groups looked at four themes in more detail: Green spaces, the economy, the urban and historic environment, and transport. Two groups looked at transport as this had been identified as a particular concern at the roadshow events held the previous week. Approximately 60 people attended.

3.7 Briefing sessions

Two briefing sessions were held, on September 1 (evening) and September 2 (morning). These sessions were aimed at stakeholders and the general public were invited in response to demand from people who were unable to attend the Community Forum. Karime Hassan gave a presentation and took questions, supported by Jamie Hulland (DCC Highways) Howard Smith (ECC Planning). Over the course of the two sessions, 45 people attended.

4 PUBLIC RESPONSES

- 4.1 The consultation has provided a huge amount of data. The purpose of this section of the report is to present this data into a coherent narrative that fairly conveys what the participants have told us.
- 4.2 Positive response to concept of Vision. Respondents were enthusiastic about the idea of having an overall Vision guiding future development.

“Vision doc very important – went to City Centre exhibition in 1990 at Guildhall – saw a proposal for the development of Princesshay which eventually attracted Land Securities.”

“Marvellous and positive to have a vision.”

“The vision appeals to me because it keeps the city at a human scale and stresses people’s appreciation of place.”

“Ambitious but achievable.”

“Excellent and visionary!”

- 4.3 The Vision was seen as being of particular importance in relation to preventing past mistakes in the development of the city centre.

“For you guys having a vision is very important. We can’t stand still. The old Princesshay is a great example of how not to do it”.

“Congratulations on the Vision – previous development has been somewhat opportunistic, not led by a vision.”

“A good idea. Put right the damage of the 60s and 70s when everything was bulldozed for the car.”

- 4.4 The survey form asked people if they thought that having a vision for the future of the City Centre was a good idea. 82% of respondents said yes, 15% were unsure and only 2% said no.
- 4.5 Whilst the vast majority of respondents agreed that having a vision was a good idea there were some voices of dissent.

“The document appears full of impractical suggestions, with no proposals that competent officers themselves could not have formulated.”

“The document seems very lightweight indeed.”

“The language makes it difficult to read, should be in plain English.”

- 4.6 The biggest issue and area of concern was transport. This breaks down to a number of sub-themes: public transport, parking and cross-town traffic

4.6.1 Public transport.

Respondents identified buses in the High Street as a significant issue. However, there was a range of opinions on what to do with them.

Some people wanted buses to be removed completely:

“Total removal of bus routes through the High Street and Sidwell Street.”
“Please remove buses from Exeter High Street and make this a Pedestrian/Cycle zone only.”

While others wanted them to be retained:

“I am pleased that at present the buses run down the High Street because my mobility is limited and I want to be able to get (for example) to the Farmers' Market.”

“I don't think you can move buses from the High Street. People are living longer and have disabilities. If you remove the buses and some of the multi-story car parks you'll destroy the city centre.”

“How do we resolve issue of buses? Need to take the opportunity to look at a more effective transport system that people want to use. Rather than seeing buses as just a problem, we need to see them as part of the solution.”

One suggested solution was to have nodes at either end of the High Street:

“Wouldn't it be simpler to have a simple shuttle bus along the High Street between the two nodes at either end?”

“Would it be possible to have two nodes at either end of the linear city, dropping off people who want to get into the city centre and using a bypass route if they need to pass through the centre on their way elsewhere?”

Some people had suggestions for alternative forms of public transport:

“Do you need buses in the centre of Exeter? Couldn't we have something more appropriate, like rickshaws?”

“Why is there no mention of TRAMS? Or completely alternative transport systems??”

“Replace public transport with either electric buses or trams.”

Public transport more generally (beyond just the bus network) was considered to be important:

“Transport is crucial. The opportunity exists to remove buses from the City Centre and improve the rail infrastructure, especially considering re-use of the City basin rail connection and improvements to other stations, especially St James Park Halt and St Thomas.”

“I think it's important that the Bus Station stays in the city centre and that public transport links between St David's and the city centre are improved.”

“How many people using cars now would actually use public transport instead, or be willing to walk up the hill from a replacement car-park location?”

“the city has many railway stations. Many of the students at Exeter College (c1500) come in by rail. Development of the current stations is urgently needed. There is also land associated with the railways which is still available for development.”

4.6.2 Parking

Parking seemed to divide people. Some thought that parking was essential to the continued wellbeing of Exeter:

“People are lazy, they want to come to a car park near the shops.”

“Don’t forget as well that if people are coming to Exeter to shop, they need to be fairly close to parking.”

“As a competitive retail centre, it is vital for Exeter to make access to the centre as easy as possible for as many people as possible. This cannot be done by taking away one method of travelling to the centre, namely the car.”

Other people were of the opinion that car parks (and provision for motorists more generally) were a problem:

“Overprovision for motorists generally spoils the quality of life in urban areas, particularly given the vast amounts of space required for roads and parking.”

“On the continent they seem to build their car parks below ground, whereas here we seem to build above ground. Wouldn’t building below ground allow us to make better use of the space?”

“I would be pleased to see the car parks developed because they are eyesores. Even making them look nicer would help. The Princesshay car park is better and blends in more.”

4.6.3 Cross centre through traffic

This was a big issue and the specific idea of reducing traffic flow through the London Inn Square raised a lot of concerns.

There were comments supporting the idea:

“The city centre should not be a short cut, it should be for pedestrians.”

“Prioritise the pedestrian city centre”

“Trying to reconcile needs of traffic/pedestrians will end up in a fudge. I believe that the Vision should say ‘no cross town traffic’ and then deal with the consequences. I believe that traffic will sort itself out in due course.”

“Discouraging unnecessary car travel into the centre is essential as the obsession to accommodate more traffic has come to play a detrimental part in the city centre’s health, well-being and environment.”

“I agree that far too much is devoted to cars, roads and parking, resulting in ugly barren areas that are slightly scary out of hours and create the impression that people are a bit of a nuisance. Complete pedestrianisation would be a great thing.”

“Let’s reduce the car dominance and make the city more human scale.”

“Paris Street and Sidwell Street: the High Street, Sidwell Street and most of Queen Street should be pedestrians only”

“The City Centre proposals will close many of these routes or make them impossible...where is the traffic to go without causing unacceptable congestion, journey times and pollution.”

The majority of comments questioned where the traffic would go, if cross town access was restricted:

"If the linkage of High Street & Sidwell Street is to be improved, how will the vehicular traffic using Longbrook Street and Paris Street be diverted?"

"The new Waitrose supermarket on Heavitree road will create another reason to cross the city centre by car."

"North Street and South Street are busy all day with private traffic; if these roads are closed to this traffic, where does it go instead - Bonhay Road and Exe Bridges are already overcrowded"

"Traffic congestion is the factor that holds the city back and this should be addressed before money is spent attracting more people into the city."

"The further pedestrianizing of city centre, while it has its attractive points, raises the question of where the traffic will actually go to – this needs to be considered in the wider context of the city as a whole. The best example of this would be the re-development of Paris Street to become one-way, which has contributed to problems in Sidwell Street."

"What happens to all the cross-city traffic that is magically stopped by this Vision. How do you stop it impacting on the surrounding close to the centre residential areas?"

"Southgate - Western Way is now pedestrianised in your picture and where is the traffic heading into South Street going to with the new plans for North St/Paul St."

"I am also very concerned about the plans for a change to traffic flow at Paris St/Sidwell St for the benefit of John Lewis. Is the new route taking all the traffic very near a school?"

There were some wider concerns about the Vision seeming to be anti-car:

"the car will remain the only real option for travel in rural areas, and Exeter is kept alive by it's rural hinterland."

"Traffic flows need to be maintained however, cars aren't going away just yet."

"Seems anti-car - very awkward for people to get in close to the city centre. A lot of traffic into and through the city - needs to be a road - a ring road to by pass the City centre."

"Removing cars entirely isn't suitable or practical."

4.7 There seemed to be widespread support for making Exeter a greener place:

"I think this is critical for enhancing the connection to the river, which currently is so disconnected and is a huge missed opportunity. This single change would significantly alter and improve the feel of the city."

"I do think that Exeter needs to become a 'greener' place."

"We are pleased to see Principle 17: Increase urban biodiversity by creating and connecting habitats within the built fabric and along the riverside and the reference to urban tree planting."

"Maintaining, creating more of and enhancing greenspace is central to the attractiveness of the city."

"It is important to keep the view of the hills around Exeter. I am pleased to see this in the document and I hope the Council has the power to prevent development that affects this."

"If City leaders are bold and push to create the 'green' city described in the Vision then all the residents of the city will benefit and Exeter could become a vibrant, sustainable city."

"More trees, and not just in the city centre."

Some people did question what this actually meant:

“As to the greening mentioned... There is a hazy and undefined notion of how to 'green' a city. Planting trees is not enough, insulating is not enough”

There was also some question of how green recent developments were:

“Princesshay new build was very disappointing in terms of looking forward - little green space/shade for instance.”

“Recent developments (notably Southernhay) are sterile, unattractive to people as well as wildlife.”

“we don't want to become a destination shopping centre - not very green!”

4.8 There was considerable criticism for some of the existing architecture in the City Centre

“The High Street itself has some very bland post-war architecture, the vision does not seem to address these past mistakes.”

“I hope that you will be able to hold a good line on the Vision in the face of the aspirations of developers. There are some compromises in Princesshay.”

“Unfortunately some of the principles have been ignored in recent development, e.g. sky line, which has done lasting damage to the city.”

“the continued existence of the Debenhams tower which is very ugly and brutally dominates the High Street.”

“Excellent, knock down the Guildhall shopping centre and build the same shops in a better building.”

“Princesshay with its canyon of concrete and public loo exterior has destroyed a sense of open space that was in the city before.”

“Our planners, officers and elected members simply don't have the imagination or the competence to do anything but encourage more shops, offices and housing developers here.”

Sidwell Street did not appear to be well loved:

“Please please please, knock down Paris St bus station.. It's an eyesore and an embarrassment. Sidwell St needs the same treatment.”

“Most of Exeter is really nice, it is only Sidwell Street that is universally renowned for being a dump.”

“the 50's buildings in Sidwell street need pulling down and the bus station is an embarrassment.”

“Demolition of most of Sidwell Street would seem appropriate...”

Fore Street was also referenced as needing attention:

“I suggest that the city completely reappraise the entire Fore St area - it is architecturally rich but shoddy in places.”

“Even the odd and joyful shop fronts in the arcade in Fore Street were suppressed by council officers imposing some awful institutional colour scheme and uniformity on them.”

The 'new' buildings portrayed in the document came in for some adverse comment:

"In your illustration you show more average ugly square buildings"

"The view of South St (in the document) is now ruined by more cheap, ugly square buildings."

"I and not to keen on the improvement to Exe bridge and the river. I do feel that there needs to be a change there, but I did not like the artist impression of what it could look like"

"North Street - more average square buildings that clash with the view over the Iron Bridge."

Other responses expressed a more positive aspiration for the City Centre:

"I think that Exeter should be very mixed with contemporary and historic buildings."

"Big open car spaces feel inhuman - we need to recolonise neglected bits of the city with smaller scale buildings with variety."

"Sustainable buildings - set criteria for developers that the buildings really really really have to be sustainable in design and that includes reflecting the character of Exeter."

4.9 Culture and history. A recurring comment was that people would like a theatre in the City Centre:

"I would like to see a big move that built a new concert hall in the city centre.

The Northcott is very much a small theatre, is not easily accessible and will be even less so in future with no adjacent parking."

"Also the type of "theatre" should be identified as similar to The Pavillions at Plymouth offering a versatile facility for seated as well as standing shows."

"A theatre within the city walls (to replace the Northcott) is essential."

"More consideration of cultural facilities e.g. Corn Exchange is a very poor venue, Phoenix is great but can only handle small events."

"A good concert hall and theatre and other performance venues."

Some respondents felt that Exeter did not currently make enough of its historical attractions:

"City currently doesn't make as much of it's historical attractions as it could – hard to find or see many sights even with signposts directing people."

"The need to promote and publicize the city's many historical legacies: e.g. Stepcote Hill, the medieval bridge, St Bartholomew's cemetery, Cricklepit Mill"

"The historic bits need to be made as much of as possible, they create depth and warmth and a lived in feel"

There is a sense that Exeter does not currently have a high profile as a cultural centre:

"I am not clear how the big issues address the objective of making Exeter a cultural centre"

“Culturally Exeter has the potential but doesn’t quite deliver with the Phoenix and Cavern holding a very dim torch for cultural integrity within the city”

“More emphasis on cultural activities. What a great starting point the new museum will provide.”

- 4.10 Shopping and commerce. A common comment was that Exeter is dominated by major chains and that small retailers are disadvantaged:

“Encouraging independent retail outlets and an original community centre, rather than a homogenised street of typical High Street chain branded shops.”

“Its very hard for independent retailers and new developments can mean an increase in rents.”

“Sounds good in practice but the city centre in terms of retail needs to move away from the generic brands which are currently present.”

“It is essential that independent retailers are encouraged into the city and areas such as South Street and Sidwell Street are promoted as independent havens and not neglected as is currently the case.”

“Greater mixture of shops, encourage small businesses with lower rents, to reduce the clone town multinational shops effect.”

“They have allowed the idiosyncratic and unique to be chased out by high business rates. (Wattys, Elands immediately spring to mind).”

“More ironmongers and shoemakers and such: less low-quality, high priced (or low quality, low priced) sweatshop clothing”.

It was suggested by some that the future for the City Centre may not be wholly dominated by shops:

“I think that a move away from pure commerce to a mixed centre with features that are replicated nowhere else will be essential to save the old city area.”

“Many peripheral retail areas have high levels of voids. With increasing online shopping there may be a need for fewer retail units. What alternative uses could be found for them? Not just student digs please.”

- 4.11 Security and anti-social behaviour. Although the document deals primarily with improvements to the built environment, respondents also saw a need for improvements to personal safety:

“I agree that far too much is devoted to cars, roads and parking, resulting in ugly barren areas that are slightly scary out of hours and create the impression that people are a bit of a nuisance.”

“I should have liked to see some discussion of issues of helping citizens and visitors feel safe at night”

“finer grain must not create dark, dingy, dangerous areas; need a safe city for single walkers.”

One interesting observation was that Princesshay feels safe in the evening

“The Guildhall development is locked at night, Princesshay is not, for example, but Princesshay feels quite comfortable to walk through at night because it has broad lighted areas. Bus stops in the High Street help that area feel safe at night.”

Anti-social behaviour from night life in the city centre was cited as a problem:

“Night Clubs, noise at nights and security at nights, on the weekends especially.”
“There are too many fast food outlets leading to street litter and too many bars with a focus on getting drunk”

4.12 Further Consultation

Any future projects would need considerable community consultation and engagement and this was highlighted by some respondents:

“I think these need to spelled out in more pragmatic terms. They feel more led by planning concepts than community engagement, though I think they have great potential”

“I feel that the local community are not being considered in their visions.”

4.13 The public’s views on the 17 Principles

No Principle commanded a majority of responses and no Principle(s) stood out dramatically from the rest. Instead there is a gradual slide from the most popular Principle (9, 39%) down to the least popular (1, 4%). However, as a broad theme there are a number of Principles which reference pedestrian priorities (10, 11, 13, and 12) and all four are in the top seven. This, perhaps, contrasts with the concerns raised about reducing car access across the city and highlights the difficulty of reconciling contradictory demands.

The public were also asked whether they agreed with the seventeen Principles laid out in the document. The majority of respondents (79%, aggregated) agreed with most of the Principles.

	%
Agree with all of the Principles	22%
Agree with most of the Principles	57%
Not sure/no opinion	19%
Disagree with most of the Principles	2%
Disagree with all of the Principles	0%

4.14 The public’s views on the four ‘Big Moves’.

There was considerable support, in general terms, for the Big Moves, which are:

1. Creating space beyond the historic walls at the East Quarter as the first step in the regeneration of a compact centre;
2. Regeneration within the city walls;
3. A new place on the river;
4. Improving the sense of arrival.

Of 104 comments, 63 spoke positively about them, while only 8 were explicitly negative. It must be noted that although people were broadly supportive, there were still concerns about affordability, traffic routing and the nature of any future development at these sites. These comments and concerns have been dealt with in the narrative above.

5 ORGANISATIONS RESPONSES

- 5.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to present the responses from stakeholder organisations.
- 5.2 The Campaign to Protect Rural England agree with the majority of the principles. They highlight their desire to see good quality contemporary design promoted over 'pastiche' architecture, promotion of more serious cultural activities and specialist shops. Commend the vision but would like to see a Masterplan approach rather than site by site approach and the use of consultant architectural advice or design panel to raise quality.
- 5.3 The Environment Agency preferred use of sustainable drainage and porous surface should be incorporated in the vision. The 'New Place on the River' should take existing and future flood risks into account. Support green transport promotion and provision of access to green recreation. Look forward to working with City Council in matters of flood defence and the management of green spaces.
- 5.4 Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd are supportive of proposals to improve the shopping environment in the city centre.
- 5.5 The Sea Cadets promote enhancement of the Quayside and improvement to access to it.
- 5.6 Devon and Cornwall Police support the balanced role for the city centre set out in the vision. Support offered for Principle 8 and the Principle that Exeter be a principal regional shopping destination but question need for new larger floorplates. Seek reassurance that the 'Space for Growth' will not undermine the existing centre and should be supported by attractive links to the historic centre and Primary Shopping Area.
- 5.7 The Police Architectural Liaison Officer considered that the opportunity to have an impact on reducing crime at this early stage should not be underestimated; links to Safer Places, Secured by Design and Architectural Liaison should be made. Sustainability should extend to include designing out crime. Spaces should encourage a diversity of uses. Recesses should be avoided, planting should work in harmony with lighting and CCTV extended to design out hiding places. Street furniture should be considerably located to reduce nuisance. Informal surveillance through high levels of public use of space improves perceptions of safety.
- 5.8 The RSPB consider the impact of any increased residential provision within the City Centre Vision to the nearby protected areas. The Council will have to

- undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (and potentially an appropriate assessment) under Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Habitats Regulations) to determine that its proposals for housing growth will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of these sites, particularly from additional recreational disturbance. Mitigation may include visitor access management of these designated sites and/or Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space. It would also anticipate that the measures set out in the Residential Design Guide SPD relating to Sustainable Development and Enhancing Biodiversity will be adhered to. This should apply to commercial as well as residential development and include public buildings, in densely populated areas the provision of living roofs would be particularly appropriate.
- 5.9 English Heritage consider that the report is quite inward looking, its objectives will inevitably depend on an holistic and integrated approach in managing the future of the city as a total entity. The risk is that initiatives which aim to reinforce city centre character and performance might, if pursued in isolation, end up divorcing it from its hinterland, thus creating a two tier city. The ambition must be to develop and harness the "energy" of the city centre for the benefit of the city as a whole - the question then is, what systems of benefit sharing - transfer, defrayal, displacement or connection - need to be put in place to enable this to happen? The concept of quarters based on existing and defined areas of character is accepted in principle. But inevitably the broad nature of this visioning exercise requires follow up activity to better understand the nature, dynamics and significance of those quarters to properly inform any proposals for intervention or change. Ideally this would be carried out within a city-wide characterisation initiative, to provide all the evidence necessary to substantiate proposals and appreciate their consequences. English Heritage are happy with the regime of suggested Principles although some which are site specific run the risk, despite the in-built health warnings, of becoming hostage to fortune blueprints. Although it appreciates the campaigning nature of the document and its need to convince and compel in its advocacy, it is therefore nervous that images of any kind, even though only illustrative, have been prepared before activity of the kind outlined above has been undertaken.
- 5.10 Natural England welcomes Exeter City Council's aspirations to create a 'green' capital and recognition of the importance of the landscape setting of the city and maintaining close links with the surrounding countryside and initiatives which respect landscape character and encourage retention and wildlife sensitive management of existing green spaces, creation of new spaces and linking corridors between them. These links should provide access for wildlife as well as people. We welcome the acknowledgement of the Green Infrastructure Strategy work in Principle 15 of the document and the desire to connect the City Centre to the wider GI strategy. The key linkages to the GI strategy in its view is that the Exe Valley Park and the cross city access route from the new M5 bridge crossing through the city centre and out towards the Haldon Forest ridge. These were both identified as strategic projects in the GI strategy so it is particularly important that changes to the city centre incorporate these and deliver the relevant elements of them, as and when any developments are implemented. Principle 14 has the potential to conflict with some of the other principles/aspirations in that the area around Exe Bridges is currently green open space, admittedly constrained by roads and flood defences. Whilst it agrees that there is huge

potential for improvement of this space and its use this will need to be carefully planned to ensure that it doesn't create a wildlife barrier.

- 5.11 The Theatres Trust support Principle 7. Planning policies should ensure that the impact of cultural activities is maximised and that the built infrastructure is protected and enhanced, ensuring that the right facilities are provided in the right place to serve the arts, sports, education and leisure needs of residents and visitors. Allowing restaurants and cafes in open plan settings would enhance museum/theatre/cinema use and such improvements should entertain and stimulate local offices and businesses. Audiences coming to one of the evening entertainment venues will enliven the surrounding area in the evening and provide regular custom for the local bars and restaurants outside normal working and shopping hours. It has noted the suggestion of a new theatre. Its only quibble is that the pages are not numbered.
- 5.12 Devon Archaeological Society welcomes the focus on Exeter's historic plan (especially Principle 4). However it feels that the 'Vision for Exeter' should include an explicit reference to the need for protection of historic buildings and of the archaeological levels which survive beneath the present surface. We are still limited in what we know about Exeter's historic and archaeological heritage and the 'Vision for Exeter' provides an opportunity to recognise the value of this and balance any proposed developments against the damage caused to this heritage. There is reference to pedestrian access to the line of the city wall. It should also be the City's intention to improve that access whenever opportunities arise. Every effort should be made to ensure that any future new buildings of large 'footprint' and/or high rise are kept outside the walled city.
- 5.13 Devon County Council is supportive of a Vision for the city centre as it will set an important framework for both the City and County Councils to guide future development and achieve positive social, environmental and economic outcomes. The principles will assist planners and local members in their decision-making and help developers understand the longer term aspirations of the local authorities and their communities.

Some of the big moves will be challenging and possibly undeliverable. Some of the proposals, such as *a new place on the river* should be treated with caution due to its significant environmental (flooding) and transportation (Exe Bridges) implications.

One of the big issues not addressed in the Vision is the historic quayside. The 'big move' aimed at creating a new place on the river may undermine the fragile economy of the quayside environment.

Devon County Council agrees with most of the principles although 17 is arguably too many. Several of the principles have similar themes, which could be combined to reduce repetition. For instance, principles 2, 4 and 12 are about improving pedestrian and cycle access in and around the city and better connecting the different quarters of the city. Similarly, principles 3 and 6 both mention the type and form of buildings in the city and the need to balance the existing historic design with more contemporary styles.

The principles relating to the urban form and character of the historic centre are important in ensuring that the city continues to offer a high quality environment, which is attractive for residents, shoppers, workers and potential investors. Balancing the historic environment and green space with the pressures of new development will become more challenging but this has been successfully achieved with the Princesshay development.

Furthering these principles to ensure sympathetic design and careful consideration for the environmental impacts is highly praised.

The principles relating to accessibility are equally important as it needs to be easy for people to travel into the city centre by a range of transport modes. There has been increasing use of bus, cycle and rail use over the past 10 years while traffic levels have stabilised, which is very encouraging. However, with growth aspirations to increase the number of dwellings in the city by 12,000, and with the retail core attracting people from a much wider catchment area, it will be important that key radial corridors and ring roads maintain their capacity and function of carrying significant levels of traffic. This is particularly important if the city council has aspirations to limit cross-city movements, which will result in traffic transferring onto the busier routes such as Western Way and Exe Bridges.

Principles 1-9, 12 15 & 17 are fully supported. Comments on the other principles are listed below.

Principle 10: The principle of prioritising pedestrians and discouraging cross-town traffic is supported as this can help deliver a high quality, safer environment for people living, working and shopping in the city. The County Council is fully supportive of the signage proposals, aimed at encouraging visitors to use car parks best suited to the route they are travelling into the city on, rather than crossing the city to park. The Local Transport Plan is placing a strong emphasis on encouraging people travelling into the city centre to walk, cycle, travel by bus (including Park and Ride) or use rail. There is limited capacity on Exeter's roads so using other sustainable means of transport is expected to offer a more convenient, cost effective and attractive option to the private car. It will nevertheless be important to consider the effects of restrictions on essential cross-city vehicle journeys that will need to be accommodated on alternative routes. For instance, employers' business trips and bus services, where the value of time is high, may be affected negatively by restricting access.

Principle 11: Devon County Council consider that buses serve an important role in transporting a significant amount of people into the city centre. Currently, the city services provide a convenient service, dropping bus passengers outside the shops, and allowing people to make their return journey from either end of the High Street. With a strong emphasis on future development hanging off the spine of the city, the High Street will increase in length, particularly with the redevelopment of the bus station. The principle suggests that bus traffic should be rationalised and only key through services permitted within the city walls; however, this will significantly reduce the accessibility of the city by bus. Services will be less convenient with more remote boarding and alighting for passengers, which will disadvantage people with reduced mobility. This proposal is unlikely to make public transport the preferred means of getting into the city.

Principle 13: Devon County Council supports the principle of enhancing the arrival experience. For pedestrians and cyclists it is important that connections into the city are safe and convenient, and there are areas, such as between the quay and the city centre where this can be improved. Work is also ongoing to improve St David's and Central Station forecourts and the redevelopment of the bus station will include an improved facility which will enhance the perception of bus travel into Exeter from outside the city. It does not support the concept of replacing roundabouts on the edge of the city [centre] with tightened junctions. This is likely to be expensive, detrimental to the environment and will reduce the capacity of roads, which provide an important function in transporting significant volumes of traffic across the city. This principle conflicts with Principle 10, which seeks to discourage cross city traffic. If cross-city routes are restricted, then the ring roads and radial routes will need to accommodate these displaced traffic movements. The recent widening of Western Way is evidence of a successful scheme which has helped improve the flow of traffic on the inner bypass and access to Exe Bridges. It will be difficult to tighten junctions and enable the network to continue to operate effectively; however this does not mean that simpler crossing facilities cannot be achieved along Western Way. The County Council is keen to work with the City Council to investigate options.

Principle 14: There are concerns about the deliverability of this proposal in transportation and environmental terms, as well as the effects it will have on the historic quayside, as described above. It would be preferable to improve connectivity between the city centre and the existing quayside rather than creating a new place on the river. Given the distance between the two riverside settings, new development is likely to compete with rather than complement the existing leisure, retail and entertainment offer.

Principle 16: Devon County Council advises that Exe Bridges carries approximately 50,000 vehicular trips a day, which emphasises its importance as a strategic node in Exeter's transport network. It provides the main road river crossing in the city and serves an important function for traffic travelling between Mid Devon (including significant HGV movements) and the strategic road network via Alphington Road. The Exe Bridges intersection will remain a heavily trafficked junction and needs to operate efficiently to ensure the continued prosperity of the city. Similar to the comments in Principle 13 in relation to Principle 10, Bonhay Road and Western Way will in the future become the primary routes for cross-city movements, which will put increased levels of traffic through Exe Bridges.

Big Move 2: Balancing Effects of Growth. The redevelopment of the bus station is likely to shift the core retail area further east (having already moved with the Princesshay development) and it is important that with the lengthening of the High Street, there is balanced development to retain pedestrian activity and support for local businesses in the west quarter of the city. The quality of North Street and the Guildhall and Harlequins shopping centres is poor and proposals to better integrate these areas with the historic centre is strongly supported.

Removing multi storey car parks from within the city walls, namely Mary Arches Street and Guildhall, would be costly and would result in the loss of a key

element of infrastructure. Finding a suitable alternative site which could accommodate approximately 1000 spaces is likely to be impracticable. The existing car parks are well used and help achieve good pedestrian footfall through the Guildhall Shopping Centre and lower High Street. The effects of removing these parking areas on the local retailers would need careful consideration. Pedestrianising North Street is also likely to prove challenging, particularly with similar proposals for the Paris Street / New North Road area. This would need further analysis to investigate the feasibility of achieving this.

Big Move 3: A New Place on the River: Devon County Council's comments have been covered through comments on Principles 14 and 16.

Big Move 4: A Sense of Arrival: Devon County Council's comments have in part been covered through comments on Principles 13.

The emphasis on the bus station and St David's and Central rail stations as key arrival points is welcomed. The role of rail, in particular, is an important part of the future transport strategy for Exeter, as it will help manage traffic growth and improve access for commuters, visitors and shoppers travelling into the city.

6 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 6.1 It has been suggested that the City Centre Vision should be extended to include Quayside. Whilst adjacent to the City Centre this area has a separate role and function. The City Centre Vision does not undermine the role of the Quayside (which has its own masterplan) but supports improved linkage with the centre and supports public access, use and visual enhancement of the riverside as a whole.
- 6.2 The specific points made by the Police Architectural Liaison Officer are noted, but considered too detailed in nature for this document. Supporting text to Principle 8 will now refer to protecting public safety through design.
- 6.3 The issues raised by the RSPB regarding assessment of effect of growth on designated nature conservation sites are more properly dealt with in the statutory planning process including the Development Plan Documents and the consideration of planning applications.
- 6.4 A request has been made that further analysis and public consultation be taken before any specific detailed schemes of highway alterations are carried out. Detailed schemes will be subject of consideration by the Exeter HATOC and of further public consultation in their own right.
- 6.5 The proposed principal changes to the document are summarised in the table below.

#	Change	In response to:
1	Add reference to flood defence function in Principle 14.	EA
2	Amend supporting text to principle 14 to include reference to protection of function of River Exe as a Wildlife corridor.	Natural England
3	Add reference to future floods defence risks at Big Move 3 A New Place on the River.	EA
4	Change Principle 13 to refer 'connections to City Centre' and refer to access between Quayside and City Centre.	Sea Cadets
5	Under Big Move 1 Space for Growth - refer to a pace of growth that does not undermine existing centre.	Devon & Cornwall Police
6	Number Pages and the Big Moves.	Theatres Trust
7	In Big Move 1 Space for Growth – remove areas in hinterland north of Sidwell Street	Core Strategy policy.
8	Update image illustrating East Quarter	John Lewis store design
9	Include reference to enhanced safety through design the in supporting text to Principle 8.	D&C Police
10	In 'Big Move 1: Space For Growth' refer to pace of growth not undermining existing centre.	D&C Police
11	Amend Principle 6 to more explicitly refer to the preservation of historic buildings of merit and the preservation or recording of archaeological remains as historic assets.	Devon Archaeological Society
12	Rationalise supporting text to Principles 2, 4 & 12.	Devon County Council
13	Delete final paragraph Principle 3. Rationalise supporting text to Principles 3 & 6.	Devon County Council
14	Amend Principle 10 to refer explicitly to 'through' traffic.	DCC & Public comment
15	Amend Principle 11 to 'reduce' rather than 'remove' conflict with pedestrians.	DCC & Public comment
16	Amend supporting text to Principle 13 to remove specific reference to 'tightening roundabouts on the edge of the city centre'.	Devon County Council
17	Amend supporting text to Principle 14 and 'Big Move 3: A new place on the river' to include reference to the accommodation of the Strategic Road function of the Exe Bridges Junction.	Devon County Council
18	Amalgamate Principles 2 (part b) & 12	DCC & Public comments
19	Amalgamate Principles 13 & 15 (part a)	DCC & Public comments
20	Amalgamate Principles 15 (part b) & 17	DCC & Public comments
21	Amalgamate Principles 4 & 5	DCC & Public comments
22	Amalgamate Principles 14 & 16	DCC & Public comments

7 REVISED PRINCIPLES

- 7.1 A revised set of Principles, amended as detailed above, is included here. The original numbering (to which the comments in sections 4 & 5 refer) is included in square brackets for ease of reference.

CITY CENTRE VISION: Principles

1: Future development in the city centre will ‘hang off’ the ridge to reinforce its importance as the spine of the city. The energy will be retained within the centre by punctuating the linear centre at either end.

2: The distinctive character of the different city centre quarters will be reinforced, creating areas with their own unique character and focus.

3: Any new development in the city centre will respect the city skyline and reflect the underlying topography.

4 [4/5]: Development in the city centre will repair the finer grain of the walled city and improve the legibility of the historic walled city and city gates.

5 [6]: Create an exciting mix of contemporary design and historic buildings and enhance heritage assets.

6 [7]: Match projected housing growth in Exeter with growth in culture, services, employment and retail. Exeter should be recognised as a cultural centre of the peninsula.

7 [8]: Create a true mixed use urban centre including more employment, housing and evening economy, delivered in a higher density, space efficient urban form.

8 [9]: Become a genuinely ‘green’ place that moves beyond the standard sustainability agenda and takes advantage of local enterprise and business opportunities.

9 [10]: Prioritise pedestrians in the city centre and discourage cross town through traffic.

10 [11]: Make public transport the preferred means of getting into the city and reduce conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

11 [2b/12]: The different quarters and their attractions will be well connected beyond the linear spine with a clear network of interconnected high quality pedestrian dominated streets, public spaces and parks.

12 [13/15a]: Improve pedestrian and cycle connection to the City Centre, including to the river and surrounding countryside, and enhance the arrival experience.

13 [14/16]: Create a new place on the river at Exe Bridges and reduce the negative impact of traffic, flood defence and road infrastructure on the riverside.

14 [15b/17]: Increase urban biodiversity by creating more usable green space in the city centre and connecting habitats within the built fabric to the riverside and countryside.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Executive notes the results of the consultation, agree the changes proposed to the City Centre Vision, endorse the use of the document to inform decision making by the City Council and that Members commend the document to the Exeter Vision Partnership.

**KARIME HASSAN
DIRECTOR ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT**

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

1. City Centre: Carbon Emissions, Air Quality and Traffic; Scrutiny Committee-Economy 21 January 2010; Executive 9 February 2010.
2. Transportation Strategy: Measures to reduce carbon emissions/proposed City Council input to DCC Local Transport Plan 2011-16; Scrutiny Committee-Economy 21 January 2010; Executive 9 February 2010.
3. City Centre Vision; Scrutiny Committee-Economy 6 June 2011, Executive 21 June 2011