

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 16 March 2023

Report of: Director of City Development

Title: Exeter Plan: Outline Draft consultation: Initial reporting

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1. Between September and December 2022 the Council consulted on an outline draft of the emerging Exeter Plan, the new Local Plan for the city. Since the consultation closed, the Local Plans Team has been undertaking initial evaluation of the consultation responses received. This report provides an initial summary of this work. A full consultation report will be presented to the Executive at the meeting in April 2023.

2. Recommendation:

2.1. That the summary of the outline draft Exeter Plan consultation, as included in this report, is noted and discussed.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1. To provide an opportunity to reflect on the engagement activities undertaken during the Outline Draft Exeter Plan consultation and to give an early update on the consultation responses received.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?

4.1. There are no resource implications of the recommendation to note and discuss the contents of the report because the consultation which is referred to has been completed.

5. What are the legal aspects?

5.1. The preparation of planning policy, usually through a Local Plan, is a legal requirement under section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This report provides an update on the Outline Draft Exeter Plan consultation. This consultation complied with the provisions of Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which requires the Local Planning Authority to undertake an early statutory consultation process.

6. Report details:

Consultation activities

6.1. The outline draft Exeter Plan was available for public comment between 26 September and 19 December 2022. This twelve-week period was twice the statutory required minimum and the six weeks set out in the Council's Consultation Charter.

The consultation material included an outline draft plan document and a significant evidence base.

6.2. Responses to the consultation material were invited online through the Commonplace engagement platform with alternative options available to email or post responses back to the Council. The consultation was also signposted directly from the Council's website.

6.3. In addition to the significant digital presence, 15 public exhibitions were held across the city in every Ward, running daytime into evening to promote access. Officers from the City Development team spoke to over 1,000 people at these events.

6.4. Great efforts were made to promote the consultation in a variety of ways including via:

- Providing copies of the outline draft consultation document in all of the city's libraries.
- Permanent displays at Exeter venues including St Sidwell's Point and Riverside Leisure Centres, RAMM, Exeter Tickets (Corn Exchange) and the Civic Centre.
- The Council's weekly e-newsletter (available through 'Stay Connected') which goes to over 4,000 people across the city.
- Email / post notification for all those included on the Council's planning policy database and any properties in the potential development sites.
- A series of press releases during the consultation.
- Extensive use of social media during the consultation.
- Digital advertising screens at ten locations throughout the city including prominent locations such as Central Station, the bus station and RAMM.
- A banner over Bridge Road.
- Adverts on the Council's fleet of bin lorries providing repeat coverage of all households in Exeter.
- Print posters: Approximately 200 across all Wards in the city including libraries, community centres, parks, car parks and shops.
- Articles included in the September 2022 and November 2022 editions of the Exeter Citizen which goes to each address in Exeter.
- An article in Iscatape – Exeter's talking newspaper for visually impaired people.
- Events and workshops for students at the University of Exeter and at Exeter College.
- Promotion through Exeter Connect and associated networks including workshops with community organisations, such as Inclusive Exeter and the YMCA.
- A community organisation workshop and promotion through the Community Builders.

- Prominence on the City Council’s website homepage.

6.5. Significant efforts were also made to make the consultation material interesting and accessible in its presentation. The various features in the Commonplace engagement platform were used to present the content in more manageable sections, provide a quick survey, present an interactive map and show what development sites could look like in future. Paper copies of the plan were printed and a fully accessible digital version of the plan was made available. An audio version of the document was produced on CD whilst other alternative formats were available on request.

6.6. Finally, the consultation questions were organised in a way to enable people to respond in a variety of ways. As already explained, questions were provided within an online survey, Word versions of the survey form were available and paper copies were provided at the various exhibitions. The consultation survey initially asked a simple ‘initial feeling’ question of how the respondent felt about the policy or site, with an open, follow-up question asking for more details and an explanation of views. This provided flexibility in how people answered the questions. Lastly, as part of the online platform, a quick survey was provided to enable people to provide more general input about the key topics which people felt were most important. These topics related to the spatial strategy in the plan. The aim of this was to enable people to provide input quickly to encourage responses from those who may not have time to go through the full survey.

The consultation in numbers

6.7. A summary of the responses received and some of key patterns to these responses is provided in the next section of the report. Some key figures relating to the consultation are included below:

- Total number of people, organisations and companies responding: 1489
- Total number of responses: 3473
- Total number of responses to the ‘quick survey’: 773.
- Total number of people attending the exhibitions: 1053
- Total number of hits on the Commonplace consultation webpage: 15,781

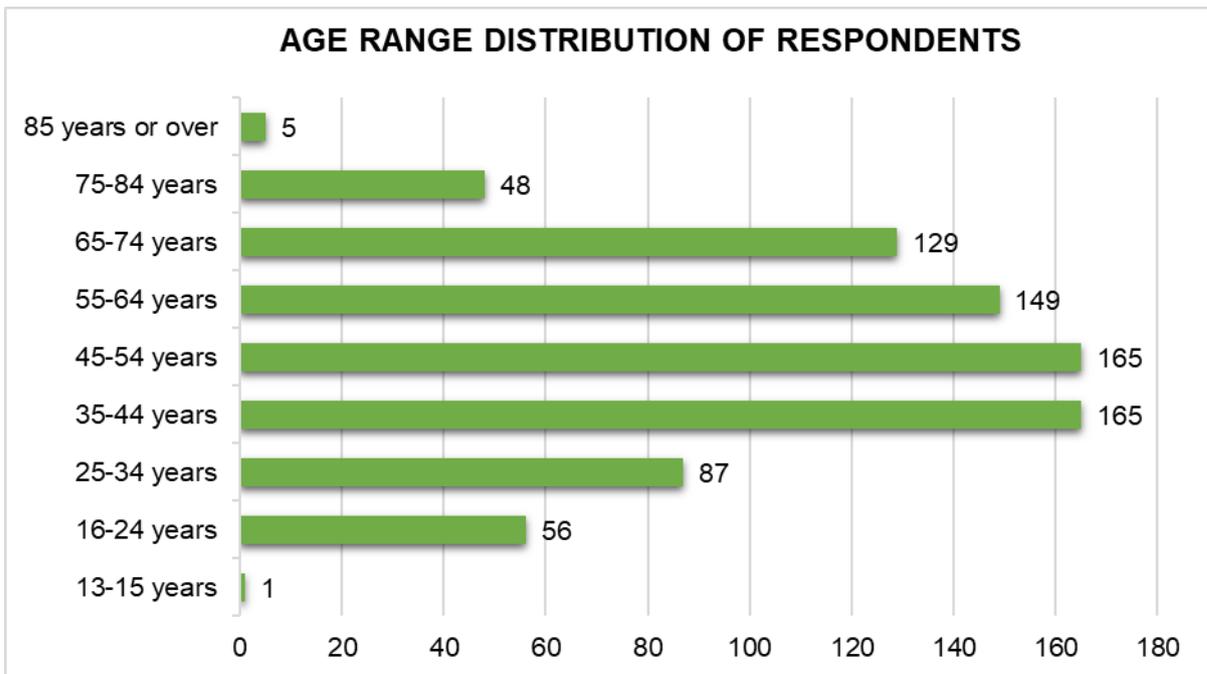
6.8. The consultation survey included an option to identify whether the response was on behalf of an individual or an organisation. The majority of the 1489 respondents were individuals (1138) with 84 stating they were responding on behalf of an organisation. Table 1 outlines a breakdown of the respondent type, including type of organisation. There were 267 people who left this question blank and did not identify whether they were an individual or organisation.

Respondent type	Number of respondents
Individuals	1138
Other organisations	40
Developers / agents / land promoters	25
Government agencies / public bodies	11
Councils	7
Parish Councils	1
Blank	267
TOTAL	1489

Table 1: Number of respondents by respondent type

6.9. The consultation survey included an option for the respondent to select their age range. 684 responses were either left blank or respondents selected 'prefer not to say' leaving 805 with the age range provided. The highest numbers of respondents fell between the four age brackets between 35-74 years, with 35-44 years and 45-54 years being equally top with 165 respondents in both of the age categories. The distribution of ages is presented in Graph 1.

6.10. The consultation's extensive online presence and its promotion intended to broaden outreach including engaging with younger age ranges. This data offers a benchmark for future consultations.



Graph 1: Age range of respondents

Summary of responses received: Quick survey

6.11. The online 'quick survey' was intended as an introduction to the Exeter Plan to help establish an idea of the kind of issues that people feel most strongly about. The quick survey listed eleven topics derived from the proposed spatial strategy and asked respondents to select a maximum of three that they considered the most important for the Exeter Plan.

6.12. The quick survey received 773 responses, more than any other individual question in the consultation. The survey placed 'tackling climate change' (321 selections), 'supporting development which reduces the need for people to travel by car' (320 selections), and 'providing good quality, affordable homes' (316 selections) as the three issues most frequently selected topics within people's top three most important.

6.13. The three topics with the fewest selections in people's top three most important issues were 'supporting well paid jobs' (121 selections), supporting culture and heritage (121 selections), and 'minimising the risk of flooding' (72 selections). More detail on the responses to the quick survey is included in Table 2.

Topic	Number of selections
Tackling climate change	321
Supporting development which reduces the need to travel by car	320
Providing good quality, affordable homes	316
Protecting and improving open spaces	265
Protecting and improving wildlife habitats	256
Improving infrastructure like schools and other community facilities	254
Focusing development on previously developed (brownfield) land	228
Improving health and wellbeing	205
Supporting well paid jobs	121
Supporting culture and heritage	121
Minimising the risk of flooding	72

Table 2: Numbers of responses to the consultation quick survey

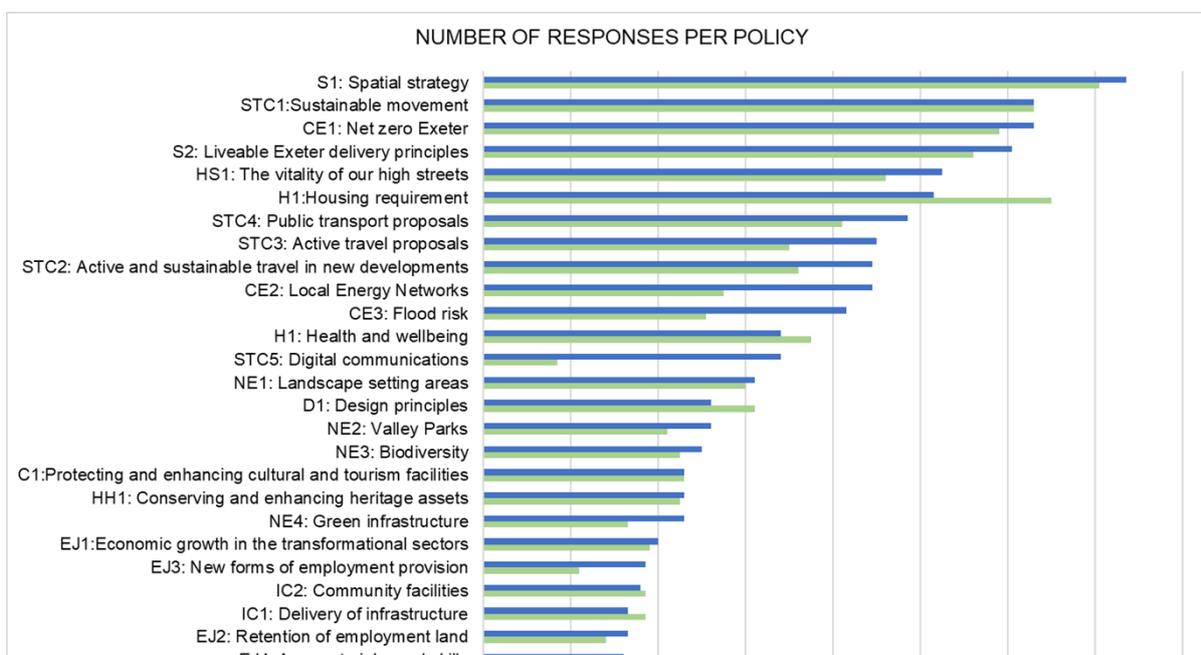
Summary of responses received: Policies

6.14. The outline draft Exeter Plan included 28 draft policies for comment covering a wide range of topics. Policy H2: Housing allocations listed all the potential development sites for the plan. This has not been analysed with the other policies because the consultation asked more specific questions on each of the sites separately. A review of the detailed policy comments is still ongoing and so a full discussion of the responses to all of the policies is not included here. An initial analysis has been undertaken and this is set out below.

6.15. The five policies which received the largest number of responses are listed below.

- S1: Spatial strategy
- STC1: Sustainable movement
- CE1: Net zero Exeter
- S2: Liveable Exeter delivery principles
- HS1: The vitality of our high streets
- H1: Housing requirement

6.16. Graph 2 shows the comparative number of responses received for each policy. The responses were either an 'initial feeling' response through which respondents could choose one of a variety of 'facial expression symbols' (e.g. a smile or a frown) to quickly demonstrate how they felt about a policy, or a more detailed comment on the policy.



Graph 2: Number of responses to the draft policies

6.17. The responses to the question asking people about their initial feeling about each of the policies show that the majority of policies (20 of the 27 policies analysed here) were generally well received with 50% or more respondents selecting feeling 'satisfied' or 'happy' with the policy. The remaining 7 policies received less than 50% feeling 'satisfied' or 'happy'. The policy responses are listed in Table 3.

50% or more feeling 'satisfied' or 'happy' with policy	Less than 50% feeling 'satisfied' or 'happy' with policy
S1: Spatial strategy	H1: Housing requirement
S2: Liveable Exeter delivery principles	STC1: Sustainable movement
CE1: Net zero Exeter	C1: Protecting and enhancing cultural and tourism facilities
CE2: Local Energy Networks	H1: Health and wellbeing
CE3: Flood risk	IC1: Delivery of infrastructure
EJ1: Economic growth in the transformational sectors	IC2: Community facilities
EJ2: Retention of employment land	IC3: Viability
EJ3: New forms of employment provision	
EJ4: Access to jobs and skills	
HS1: The vitality of our high streets	
STC2: Active and sustainable travel in new developments	
STC3: Active travel proposals	
STC4: Public transport proposals	
STC5: Digital communications	
NE1: Landscape setting areas	
NE2: Valley Parks	
NE3: Biodiversity	
NE4: Green infrastructure	
HH1: Conserving and enhancing heritage assets	
D1: Design principles	

Table 3: Responses to each policy: 'Initial feeling' responses

6.18. As can be seen from Table 3, more than 50% of the 'initial feeling responses' to policy S1 on the spatial strategy were positive. Around 28% of responses were neutral, while 21% were negative. This policy sets the tone for the whole plan, providing the key approaches to the main issues facing Exeter. The significantly greater proportion of positive responses suggests broad support for the central elements of the emerging plan.

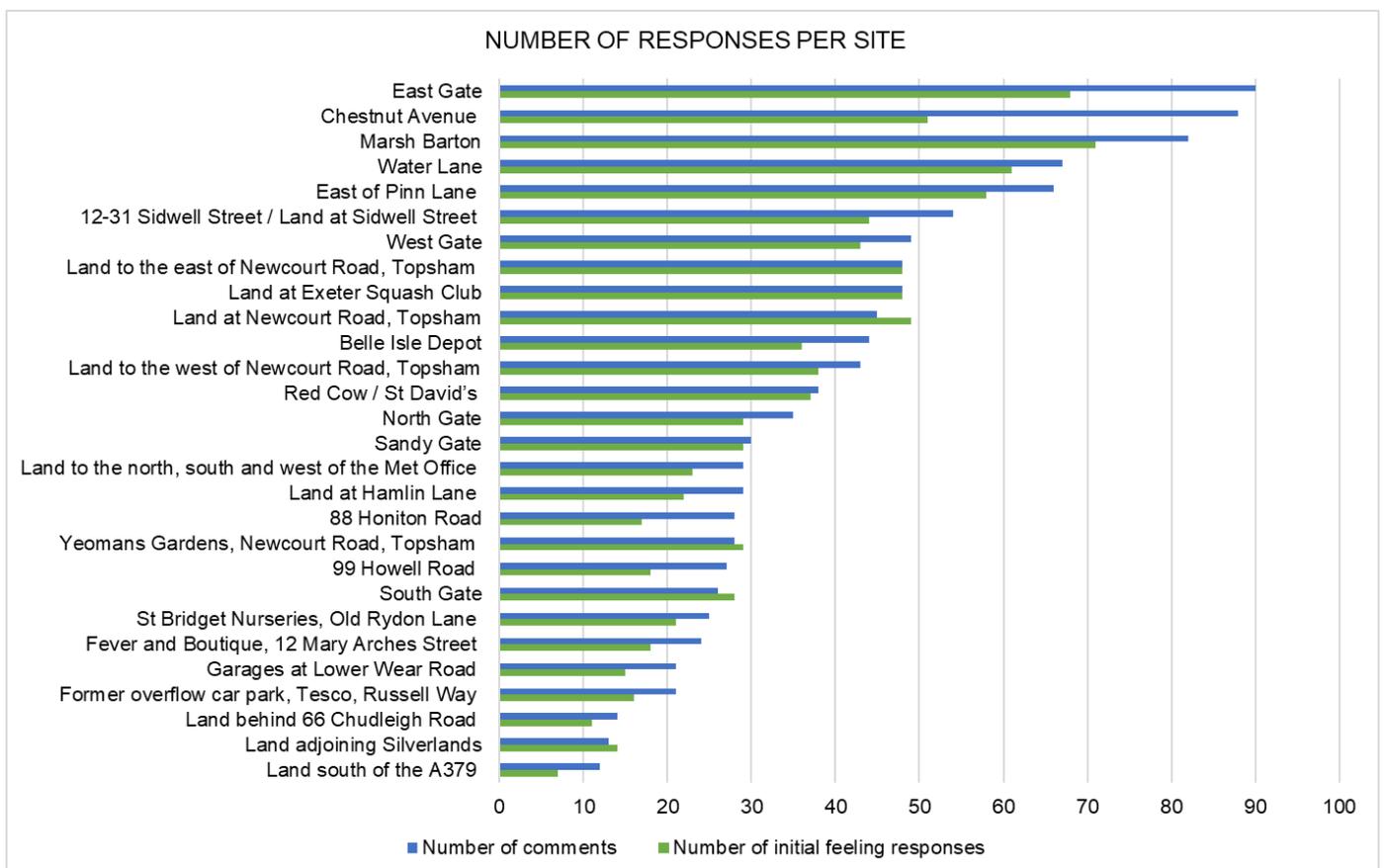
Summary of responses received: Sites

6.19. The outline draft Exeter Plan proposed 28 sites for either mixed used or housing development. The sites varied significantly in scale, ranging from 6 to 1880 homes up to 2040. Again, a full consultation analysis has not been provided here because the assessment is still ongoing.

6.20. The six sites which received the largest number of responses are listed below.

- East Gate
- Chestnut Avenue
- Marsh Barton
- Water Lane
- East of Pinn Lane
- 12-31 Sidwell Street/Land at Sidwell Street.

6.21. Graph 3 shows the comparative number of responses received for each site proposal.



Graph 3: Number of responses to the draft sites

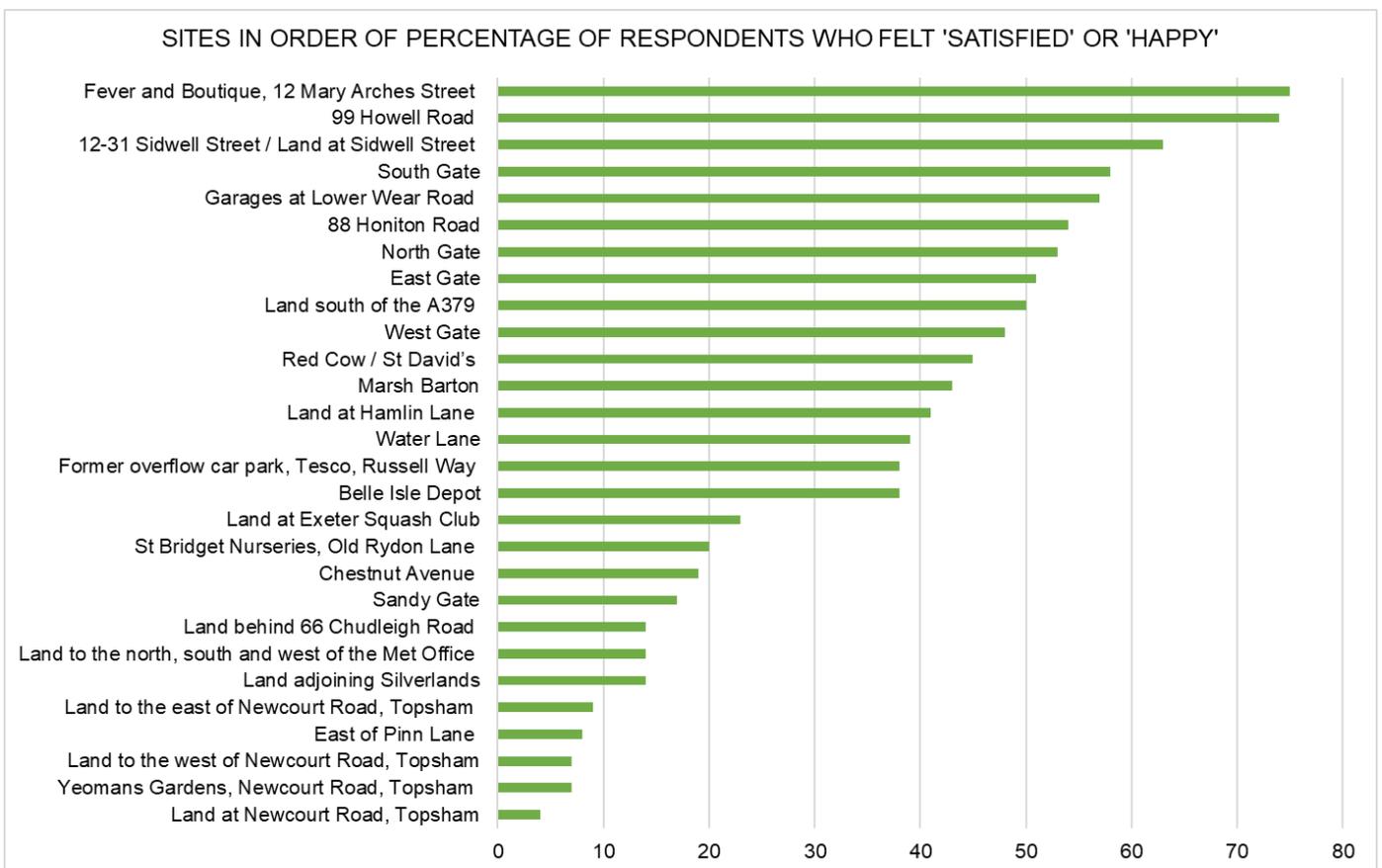
6.22. The type and scale of the sites varies and there appears to be little immediate pattern between the type of site proposed and the number of responses.

6.23. Some early analysis has been undertaken on the sites proposed and the 'initial feelings' of respondents in relation to those sites. The responses to the question asking people their 'initial feeling' about sites show that nine of the 28 sites consulted on were

reasonably well received - with 50% or more respondents selecting feeling 'satisfied' or 'happy' with the site. The nine sites are below:

- Fever and Boutique, 12 Mary Arches Street
- 99 Howell Road
- 12-31 Sidwell Street / Land at Sidwell Street
- South Gate
- Garages at Lower Wear Road
- 88 Honiton Road
- North Gate
- East Gate
- Land south of the A379

6.24. The remaining 19 sites received less than 50% of responses as 'satisfied' or 'happy'. The full list of proposed sites and the respective % of respondents who felt 'satisfied' or 'happy' with each site is presented in Graph 4.



Graph 4: Sites in order of percentage of respondents who felt 'satisfied' or 'happy' with the site ('initial feeling' questions)

6.25. The six sites receiving most support are all brownfield, while the six sites receiving least support are all greenfield. Taking this high level assessment further, 11 of the 17 brownfield sites (65%) received more responses of being 'happy' or 'satisfied' than 'unhappy' or 'dissatisfied'. This compares favourably when considered in the context of the greenfield sites proposed; only 1 of 11 greenfield sites (9%) received more responses of being 'happy' or 'satisfied' than 'unhappy' or 'dissatisfied'. This shows demonstrably that the brownfield sites included in the plan enjoyed greater support than the greenfield sites.

Next steps

6.26. The assessment of the consultation responses is currently ongoing. A more detailed consultation report will be presented to the Executive in April 2023. The responses will be used to inform the next stage of the plan-making process. A further consultation will be held later in 2023.

7. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

7.1. The recommendation in the report is that the summary of the outline draft Exeter Plan consultation is noted and discussed. No formal decision is sought. However, the content of the emerging Exeter Plan will support all five of the Council's strategic priorities through the Exeter Vision 2040, the overarching spatial strategy for the city and a series of specific thematic policies:

- Prosperous local economy
- Healthy and active city
- Housing & building great neighbourhoods & communities
- Net zero carbon city
- Thriving culture and heritage

8. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

8.1. The report is a summary of the Outline Draft Exeter Plan consultation. The recommendation is to note and discuss the summary of the consultation which has already taken place and the responses which are analysed were provided by third parties. On this basis, there are no risks associated with the recommendation.

9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

9.1 No potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for noting only.

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

10.1. There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendation.

11. Are there any other options?

11.1. It is appropriate to note and discuss the responses to the Outline Draft Exeter Plan consultation in order that they can be used to inform future stages of plan preparation. There are no other options.

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Report Author: George Marshall: Assistant Service Lead – Local Plans

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Exeter Plan: Outline draft plan

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