

Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 2025-2040

Exeter City Council submission 30 November 2024

ECC supports this consultation and the engagement of the community in developing this plan, and the objectives of decarbonisation, easier travel, reliable and resilient, unlocking development, greater places for people and the place to be naturally active.

It is appropriate to follow a vision-led approach and this accords with government policy for vision and validate. Whilst the vision to facilitate growth and support reaching net zero carbon by 2050 at the latest is admirable, Exeter has an ambition of reaching net zero by 2030 and, as such, this document does not currently align to this target. We would strongly encourage greater ambition.

We support the four place-based approach with Exeter as one of the focus areas. It is important to acknowledge the significant planned housing growth taking place surrounding Exeter and the impact this will have on the highway and public transport network into Exeter.

Strategy for connecting Devon and Torbay

The high-level strategy for road, rail and air reflects those in the emerging Exeter Plan. Improvements to the strategic rail network at Exeter must support housing development through the local plan process and support continued economic growth. It is appropriate to include digital connectivity but the document is limited in terms of the detail regarding this.

Exeter City Council supports A30/A303 improvement projects. The relocation of the motorway services elsewhere outside of the city would assist in taking pressure off the highway network around Junction 30 M5. We would like to see stronger reference to the need to connect Exeter airport with the key rail stations by bus and with the MegaBus which connects to conurbations in Devon and Somerset.

We are very supportive of the proposed upgrade to Exeter St David's train station as a strategic gateway to the region.

Strategy for Exeter

It is appropriate for this plan to build on the Exeter Transport Strategy and the objectives are appropriate as the emerging Exeter Plan dovetails with this: Greater connectivity, greater places for people and greater innovation. As well as accommodating development in the neighbouring council areas, this section of the Local Transport Plan 4 should state that this includes development in Exeter.

Greater places for people

We support reducing the dominance of cars in the city centre and improvement of walking areas. We encourage the consideration of further measures to reduce the number of vehicles in the city centre particularly through traffic to reduce GHG

emissions, improve air quality, reduce noise pollution and encourage active travel – all actions within the Exeter Net Zero 2030 Plan.

We would welcome a discussion to review on-street, off-street parking as well as additional Park & Ride provision to discourage peak period travel, encourage longer stays and to reduce car dominance in the city centre – Alphington corridor and routes from Crediton and the Exe Valley.

The place to be naturally active

We support the implementation of the current Exeter LCWIP and note the priorities within this document sit alongside this section of the plan. We support the proposal for lower speed limits to improve road safety and 'green lanes' to support active travel from villages on the edge of the city. Encouraging active travel supports the city's net zero targets, as well as providing health and clean air benefits.

We would like the plan to include an objective and action plan regarding continuing improvements in air quality across Exeter.

For the development of new cycle routes within Exeter, we would support and encourage the same standard of cycle route as those provided by the E routes such that around Pinhoe Sainsburys. This would encourage families, younger people and those that do not normally cycle to work or shop in a safe and segregated way. We would like to see the provision of covered, secure bike storage in residential and city centre locations to support the uptake of cycling in the city.

We would like this plan to include the 'School Streets Initiative' which brings benefits for child safety around school entrances, this would also provide a good opportunity to work with the education sector and engage young people in active travel. Due to the wide-ranging benefits of this initiative, we would encourage this approach to be adopted across Devon as well as in Exeter. We note the recent government announcement and guidance - www.gov.uk/government/news/government-guidelines-to-make-school-runs-happier-healthier-and-greener - and would encourage exploration of local interest and opportunities with Exeter schools and communities, together with the necessary resourcing to ensure they are feasible and sustainable.

Unlocking development

Draft development sites mentioned in the plan are still relevant, however the sites included in figure 13 need updating.

We would like to see a greater focus on reducing severance caused by Western Way, mention of an additional crossing of the canal, the inclusion of South Gate junction highway improvements to link to the Quay, improved strategic coach stopping and parking (limited Sidwell Street capacity and loss of parking at Water Lane) and improvements to Sidwell Street public realm to be added to link to the East Gate allocation.

Easier travel

Bus services

We support the proposals to improve the bus networks and corridor improvements, enhance the frequency on routes across the city as well as the region, as well as the move to low/zero emission buses. However, improvements to Cowley Bridge and Alphington Road corridors should also be included.

We would like to see improved bus services to the east of Exeter and Sowton as well as high quality cycle routes from new developments in this area.

To support and encourage residents, shoppers, students and commuters to move away from cars, the existing bus network will need to be improved. Post covid-19 some route frequency has reduced.

We would urge Devon County Council to fully explore the opportunity for a municipal local authority run model provided under the new Government legislation - www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-sets-the-wheels-in-motion-on-biggest-overhaul-to-buses-in-a-generation

Rail services

We support the proposals as this supports the growth of Exeter and the wider travel to work and study area. We also support the focus on strategic improvements to Exeter St David's and also accessibility at St Thomas and St James Park (in addition to Polsloe Bridge). We support the suggestion of a new station at Monkerton/Hill Barton. We would like to highlight the need to maintain the functionality of the Strategic Rail Network at Exeter.

Park and ride services

We support the development of a new park and ride strategy as wider provision and more frequent connections into the city encourage sustainable travel and reduce GHG emissions.

Decarbonisation

We support trials of new measures to reduce carbon emissions and the upgrade of buses to shift to zero emission vehicles. We would like to see shared mobility schemes with zero emission vehicles as soon as possible and are concerned about the lack of clarity around the statement 'Over time we will transition these to zero emission vehicles' (page 25). We would like to see a single ticketing platform for multi-modal travel in Exeter introduced within the next two years, along with improvements in the connectivity between bus and rail services. We would like to see more reference to low or no car developments in areas close to the city including the strategic development sites in Exeter.

Exeter has an Air Quality Management Area, within which one location has a concentration of nitrogen dioxide which is above the Government objective. The

LTP4 should be more explicit about the need for improvement in this area and we look forward to working with Devon County Council officers to develop plans to achieve this.

Strategy for growth areas

We fully support the Teign Estuary Trail as a link to the Exe Estuary cycle route.

Recommendation

Exeter City Council is broadly supportive of the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 but would like to see more ambitious targets and aspirations as outlined in our response above, more alignment with Exeter's ambition of net zero carbon by 2030 and a greater focus on air quality measures which were not covered in detail in this plan.