

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

Date of Meeting: 4 February 2025

Report of: Strategic Director for Place

Title: Updated Local Development Scheme 2025

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Executive

### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 The report refers to an updated Local Development Scheme which identifies a brief scope and timetable for the preparation of Council planning policy documents including the emerging Exeter Plan (the new Local Plan).

### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That Executive approves the updated Local Development Scheme (Appendix A) as the basis for preparing local planning policy.

### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 The existing Local Development Scheme was approved in September 2024. Since then, work on the Exeter Plan has progressed and there is a statutory requirement to keep the Local Development Scheme up to date.

3.2 In December 2024 Government published wide-ranging national planning reforms including a revised National Planning Policy Framework and other measures to stimulate housing delivery. These measures require Councils to review and update their timetables for new local plans. This updated Local Development Scheme addresses this requirement.

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

4.1 The evidence budgets required to prepare the planning policy documents listed in the Local Development Scheme have previously been agreed at various Executive meetings. The recommendation made in this report results in no direct additional budgetary implications.

### **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the report.

### **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 A Local Development Scheme is required under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and it must be maintained. The report

seeks approval for an updated Local Development Scheme in line with this legislation and the Government's requirement for an up-to-date plan-making timetable by early March 2025.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 The Council is required by section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) to maintain an up-to-date Local Development Scheme. The proposed revisions ensure compliance with this statutory duty and align with the Government's directive to review and update plan-making timetables by early March 2025. The recommendations in this report are consistent with legal obligations and enable the Council to continue meeting its responsibilities under national planning policy.

## **8. Report details:**

### **Background**

8.1 In accordance with legislation set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>1</sup>, the Council has an existing Local Development Scheme (LDS) which identifies the planning policy documents which it intends to publish, the subject matter to be covered by each of the documents and a timetable for their preparation. The current LDS was approved by the Executive in September 2024.

8.2 The LDS has been reviewed in response to national requirements set out by Government in late 2024. On 12 December 2024 Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework, a reviewed approach to calculating housing requirements and wider responses to a national planning policy consultation which had run between July and September 2024.

8.3 These documents were accompanied by a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister to all Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives in England underlining the need for swift and robust action to respond to the housing crisis. Continued and pro-active plan-preparation to ensure universal coverage of local plans was identified as the central pillar of the plan-led system. On this basis, the letter sets out the requirement for Councils to review and update their plan-making timetables 'within the next 12 weeks' – i.e. by 6 March 2025.

8.4 The recommended approval of the updated LDS meets this requirement.

### **Revisions to the Local Development Scheme**

8.5 As already highlighted, the Executive recently approved a revised LDS in September 2024. This has steered the continued progress on the Exeter Plan to its Publication in December 2024.

8.6 Given that the LDS was only recently updated, the fundamental details within the document (the plans to be prepared and their timetable for preparation) remain

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<sup>1</sup> [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

unchanged from the previous document. The only timetable update reflects that the Exeter Plan has been Published since the approval of the last LDS.

8.7 For completeness, the timetables for the two planning policy documents which the City Council is preparing/will prepare are set out below.

### **The Exeter Plan**

- Issues consultation (Regulation 18<sup>2</sup>): September 2021  
**Complete**
- Outline Draft Plan consultation (Regulation 18): September 2022  
**Complete**
- Draft Plan consultation (Regulation 18): October 2023  
**Complete**
- Publication (Regulation 19): December 2024  
**12 December 2024 – 6 February 2025**
- Submission to Planning Inspectorate (Regulation 22): June 2025

Indicative timetable (determined by Planning Inspectorate)

- Examination including hearings (Regulation 23 - 24):  
November/December 2025
- Adoption (Regulation 26): November 2026

### **St Luke's University Campus Supplementary Planning Document**

8.8 One of the key employment sites in the Exeter Plan is St Luke's University Campus. The site is also vital in terms of university investment and maintaining the University's high profile and status within the academic sector. On this basis, master planning work is being progressed to shape development on the site by the University. It is anticipated that the University will undertake all the necessary work in accordance with regulatory processes. Officers will provide advice and assistance in order that the work can be progressed as an SPD in due course and adopted after the Exeter Plan. Consultation will be required as part of this process – this will be jointly held by the Council and the University.

8.9 The proposed timetable for the work on the SPD is summarised below.

- Evidence gathering: 2024
- Consultation: 2025
- Further assessment: 2025
- SPD adoption: 2026

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<sup>2</sup> [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 The Local Development Scheme is important for guiding the preparation of new planning policy which will be critical to ensure the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. It will contribute to the aspirations of the Exeter Vision 2040 by helping to establish a robust policy framework which will support growth, shape places, and deliver infrastructure and community services.

9.2 Future planning policy, as set out in the LDS will help to deliver the City Council's strategic priorities of a prosperous local economy through improving Exeter as a place to attract investment. It will also provide policies to encourage health and activity in the city and to support place-making which will deliver housing and build neighbourhoods and communities. The emerging policies timetabled in the LDS will also support the progress towards a new zero carbon city and enhance the culture and heritage of the city.

## **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 There is always some risk of slippage on the plan-preparation timetable for a local plan because of the need for consultation and to address a myriad of issues raised by third parties. This is a particular issue because of the breadth and volume of Exeter Plan work being pursued concurrently and as a result of the intricacies and challenges of a brownfield development strategy and the associated evidence requirements. Risks are being proactively managed through discussion with partners, stakeholders, the compilation of further evidence and through legal advice where necessary. Risk of slippage would increase if additional projects were added to the work programme.

10.2 The Government is implementing significant national planning policy reforms which have followed major consultation. The timetable for preparing the Exeter Plan responds to transitional arrangements for plan-making as set out in the planning reforms. There is a risk that government further updates Exeter's housing requirement, resulting in the City Council falling outside the housing need threshold for transitional plan making arrangements. Urgent Counsel advice will be sought on how to mitigate this risk.

## **11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- Foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty, authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies, and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex

and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage, and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the preparation of a revised Local Development Scheme is a legislative requirement setting out a timetable of work and does not directly address any equalities issues. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Members' attention.

## **12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

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

## **13. Are there any other options?**

13.1 There are no other options because the maintenance of an up-to-date Local Development Scheme is a statutory requirement.

### **Strategic Director for Place, Ian Collinson**

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- Current Exeter Local Development Scheme.
- National planning policy reforms
- Letter from Deputy Prime Minister to all Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives

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