

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

Date of Meeting: 8 July 2025

Report of: Strategic Director for Place

Title: Local Development Scheme: Summer 202

### **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 February 2025. Since then, work on the Exeter Plan has progressed and there is a statutory requirement to keep the Local Development Scheme up to date particularly in the context of the Exeter Plan Examination process.

### **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 to consider.

### **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.

## **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. The recommendations in this report are consistent with its 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 February 2025.

8.2 This previous update was needed to meet new national planning requirements following on from wide-ranging planning reforms published with the revised National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024. However, it did not represent a full timetable update. This is now included within the revised LDS at Appendix A.

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

8.3 Given that the LDS was only recently updated, the fundamentals within the document (the plans to be prepared) remain unchanged from the previous document. The proposed updates relate to the detailed timetable for document preparation. These are discussed below.

### **The Exeter Plan**

8.4 The Exeter Plan is the key focus of the local plans policy team. In the period since the previous LDS, the Publication process for the Plan has been concluded. The next key milestone is the submission of the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate.

8.5 Subsequent to the most recent LDS update in February 2025, the local plans team has been compiling and reviewing the representations to the recent Exeter Plan consultation which saw around 110 respondents providing comments. This work has demonstrated the issues which remain to be addressed in advance of the Exeter Plan submission – a standard scenario in the preparation of local plans.

8.6 The team has also been responding to the changes to the national planning policy context which were introduced as a result of the publication of the NPPF in December and the associated updated housing requirements. There is a need to navigate the transitional arrangements as set out in this updated national policy. This has taken some time to interpret with the support of legal advice.

8.7 The local plans team also organised a day-long advisory meeting for the Exeter Plan with the Planning Inspectorate. This reflected on the representations, key issues and the transitional national policy arrangements. It made a series of recommendations for

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

additional evidence, documentation and statements of common ground with partners which need to be prepared in advance of plan submission.

8.8 These discussions have resulted in greater understanding of the additional work which is required in advance of plan submission and therefore a slight review of the plan preparation timetable is needed.

8.9 The proposed updated timetable for the Exeter Plan is set out below. This would see the submission of the Exeter Plan move from June 2025 to September 2025 to reflect the additional work required. Adoption would also move back slightly.

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

Indicative timetable (determined by Planning Inspectorate)

- Examination including hearings (Regulation 23 - 24): March/April 2026
- Adoption (Regulation 26): March 2027

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

8.10 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 the necessary work in accordance with regulatory processes. Officers will provide advice and assistance in order that the work could be endorsed as a masterplan then later 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.

8.11 The proposed timetable for the document is summarised below. This has been updated slightly to dovetail with the Exeter Plan preparation milestones and to reflect that adoption as an SPD could only take place after the adoption of the Exeter Plan.

- Evidence gathering: 2025

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

- Consultation: 2025/2026
- Further assessment: 2025/2026
- Masterplan endorsement: 2026
- Evolution into an SPD for adoption: 2027

## **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 complexity of the project and as a result of the intricacies and challenges of a brownfield development strategy and the associated evidence requirements. It is also inherent for the later stages of a local plan because the Planning Inspectorate will dictate the timings of most of the future stages of plan-making, including the Examination process. Risks are being proactively managed through discussion with partners, stakeholders, the compilation of further evidence and through legal advice where necessary. Once the Plan is submitted, regular discussion with the Planning Inspectorate will also take place to manage timetabling risks. Risk of slippage would increase if additional projects were added to the work programme.

## **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.

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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.

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