

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP
7 FEBRUARY 2012**

**EXECUTIVE
7 FEBRUARY 2012**

**TEIGNBRIDGE: PREFERRED OPTIONS, CORE STRATEGY
EAST DEVON: CONSULTATION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN
CONSULTATION ON STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To formulate a response to the consultation documents recently published by Teignbridge District Council and East Devon District Council as part of ongoing preparation of their Local Development Frameworks.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 These adjoining authorities are moving towards the submission of their strategic planning documents and are seeking the views of the general public and stakeholders as to their preferred options for growth over the next twenty years or so. Many of the strategic arguments, spatial issues and indeed interdependence between the authorities make it appropriate to consider the two documents together. Recent and proposed changes in legislation now mean that such documents can look rather more like "old style" local plans than the purely high level strategic proposals contained in Core Strategy documents; and both of these consultation documents contain significant levels of detail. East Devon's document is referred to as a local plan and also contains detailed development management policies. The City Council have been consulted on earlier stages of plan preparation by both authorities, most recently in September 2010, when a report was presented to Members on previous documents.
- 2.2 This report concentrates on the proposal for growth set out in areas adjacent to the City Council boundaries. Growth proposals in towns and villages that do not impact on the prosperity of the sub region are largely matters for the individual local authorities to determine as are the generic policies relating to matters such as climate change, green infrastructure, affordable housing and low carbon. Most of the latter types of policies are in any event common to all three local authorities in the sub region.
- 2.3 The revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) presently leaves a gap in the strategic planning background to all plan preparation including the two consultation documents. The evidence base and work done during the preparation of the RSS remains a valid and material consideration however and items, such as the issues and objectives for the sub region, remain as corporately derived and pertinent background to the preparation of these two documents as it was to the preparation of the Exeter Core Strategy.
- 2.4 The draft RSS published in 2006 at policy SR17 sets out the importance that the growth of Exeter has for the sub region and says:

"Devon County Council, Exeter City, East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Councils should plan for the balanced growth of Exeter maximising the use

of previously developed land and buildings, making provision for urban extensions, for mixed use development and to meet the longer term needs. This will require continued cooperation particularly at cross boundary locations.”

Whilst policy SR17 and its successor policies in later versions of the RSS will no longer have any statutory relevance, it does reflect the reality of the situation in the sub region in that the economic prosperity of the sub region is inexorably linked to the growth of the City and that such growth is now, and will increasingly in the future, be dependant upon policies adopted in adjoining authorities.

- 2.5 Both of these consultation documents and indeed work done previously by all three Councils, recognise the need to ensure the balanced growth of Exeter. The passing of the RSS with its prescriptive growth levels and its locational imperatives has not been mourned by many local authorities who welcome the freedom the localism agenda has given to decide for themselves the appropriate scale and location of growth within their own areas. The utility of the RSS was that it provided a strategic vision and, to some extent, prescribed a coordinated and (arguably in some instances) appropriate approach to problems and policies which crossed local authority boundaries. The challenge for the City Council (in the absence of any replacement strategic plan or body) with regard to spatial planning policies adopted by adjoining local authorities will be to ensure that they are of a scale, and in an appropriate location to deliver the balanced growth; including the necessary infrastructure, that the City and sub region needs. At the same time it will be important to recognise the adjoining authorities' right to determine the spatial priorities that they deem meet the needs of their communities.

3 TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PREFERRED OPTIONS: CORE STRATEGY

- 3.1 Teignbridge District Council published the above document for public consultation ending on 2 March. The document is relatively lengthy and is not reproduced below but a copy may be seen in the Forward Planning Team office and is available to view on Teignbridge's website at <http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=15096>

An extract of the plan showing the SW Exeter Urban extension is reproduced at Appendix 1.

- 3.2 Teignbridge have taken the period 2013 to 2033 as being appropriate for their Core Strategy and expect to deliver 300 additional jobs per annum over the plan period and 740 new houses each year. The main thrust of this additional growth is proposed for what is known as the “Heart of Teignbridge” and involves considerable housing and employment allocations in and around the periphery of Newton Abbot, accounting in all for about 50% to 60% of the overall housing growth. The plan proposes smaller scale growth of between 5% and 10% at Dawlish and Teignmouth with lesser but significant additions to Bovey Tracey and Chudleigh.
- 3.3 The other significant area for growth proposed in the plan is a single urban extension of some 2000 additional houses (15% to 20% of the overall housing total) and 6 hectares of employment land (3% of the overall employment growth) adjoining the south western boundary of the City. Members will recall that such an urban extension was first mooted by the Regional Spatial Strategy as being an appropriate way to accommodate growth in the sub region and Teignbridge, at their Issues and Option stage, proposed three alternatives ways of delivering such development to the south west of Exeter leading the City Council to express a preference for a single urban extension as offering the most sustainable method of

delivering such growth.

- 3.4 In addition to the housing and employment proposals this urban extension includes sites for new secondary and primary schools, mixed use areas including local shops and community facilities and approximately 90 hectares of green space including a ridge top park and some allotments. It is proposed that there will be a site for Gypsy and Travellers and an additional park and ride facility. Substantial highway and transport infrastructure improvements are required for the development to come forward and it is these measures that will dictate the timing and phasing of the development and which to some extent constrain the overall size of the allocation.
- 3.5 A detailed master planning exercise is being carried out by consultants to provide more detail as to how such an urban extension might work as well as providing detail on the viability and feasibility of the allocation. Officers of the City Council have been involved in this work and will continue to input into this process.
- 3.6 The overall scale of housing and employment development proposed is broadly in line with the scale of growth seen as being appropriate by the Regional Spatial Strategy but it will be a challenge for Teignbridge to deliver this high level of growth as their historical build rate is near to 300 houses per annum.
- 3.7 The consultation document recognises the important role Exeter plays in the prosperity of the sub region and the need to support its continuing prosperity. The section on the "Edge of Exeter states:

"The economic success of Exeter is vital to the region as a whole and Teignbridge residents in particular. It is therefore, relevant to consider how the Core Strategy can support this success."

Later in this chapter the text goes on to say:

"Teignbridge District Council can play an important role in supporting the City's growth and function by identifying opportunities to provide sustainable growth within the Teignbridge Plan area boundary."

- 3.8 The importance of cross boundary working is also recognised in one of the principles of development set out for the south west Exeter allocation when it is stated that it will be necessary to:

"Ensure there is a co-ordinated cross boundary approach to deliver the growth. This will be critical to success of communities in the future."

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXETER

- 4.1 The recognition by Teignbridge that they have a part to play in the balanced growth of Exeter and its importance in the sub regional context is to be welcomed. The question that needs to be addressed by both Councils is whether south west of Exeter, in Teignbridge, is an appropriate location for such growth and what scale and type of growth is required to achieve sustainable and balanced development. The most useful starting point to determine this issue remains the work done in preparation for the RSS and subsequent studies carried out individually by Teignbridge and the City Council in preparation of their Core Strategies. It is now almost universally accepted that Exeter growth in the future can only really be to the east or south of the City. All the evidence base for the RSS confirms this as does the City Council's own Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study. All three versions of the RSS had a southern "Area of Search" to accommodate additional growth with

the levels of this growth also increasing from 500 houses originally to 2500 houses in a predominantly south western area in the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes version.

- 4.2 The land to the south or south west of Exeter has clearly been identified as a possible location for the future growth of Exeter along with the more easterly "area of search" discussed later in this report when talking about possible future development in East Devon District. Possible growth in the south west provides a balance to the growth that may take place in the eastern area and it provides alternative options for timing of delivery mechanisms and implementation.
- 4.3 In its response to the Issues and Options report, the City Council supported the concept of additional growth adjoining the south western boundary of Exeter, and expressed the view that the most sustainable method of providing such growth was in a single urban extension complimentary to the allocation in the Exeter Core Strategy of an additional 500 houses at Alphington. Further work carried out for the emerging master planning exercise supports this view of sustainability and shows that such an extension is viable and deliverable and reinforces the earlier support of the City Council for such an area of growth.

5 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 5.1 The City Council welcomes the recognition in the Preferred Options Core Strategy document of the need for Teignbridge District Council to support the balanced growth of Exeter. The City Council supports the option of additional housing and employment growth in that part of Teignbridge adjoining the south western boundary of Exeter and continues to believe that a single strategic allocation located adjacent to the proposed strategic allocation at Alphington represent the most sustainable form of development. To that end the Council broadly supports the proposals in the Core Strategy particularly the strategic allocation proposed adjoining the south west of Exeter.
- 5.2 The City Council recognise the importance of joint working and cooperation on matters of strategic spatial planning and hope that Teignbridge District Council maintain the present close and cooperative working arrangements that exist between the two authorities.

6 EAST DEVON: THE NEW EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN: CONSULTATION DRAFT PLAN

- 6.1 East Devon published this document for a period of consultation beginning on 1 December and concluding on 31 January (a late submission has been agreed). The Local Plan is intended to run up until the year 2026. This document broadly follows on from the Preferred Options document the City Council commented on in September 2010 (although as set out earlier in this report the format of the document has changed somewhat in the light of changes to legislative requirements). In its response in September 2010 the City Council reaffirmed its view that it was important to promote substantial development in the "West End" of East Devon and such development should be maximised in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, infrastructure provision and deliverability.
- 6.2 The consultation document is very lengthy and is not reproduced here but is available on the East Devon website. A copy is also available in the Forward Planning team office. A plan showing the proposals for the West End is reproduced at Appendix 2.

- 6.3 The growth proposals contained in the proposed Local Plan follow closely those set out in the earlier Preferred Options consultation. The proposed revocation of the Regional Strategy however, has enabled the District Council to look again at the scale and location of growth as part of a comprehensive consultation exercise.
- 6.4 The upshot of this exercise has been to maintain substantial development in the West End of the District but to reduce the overall scale of growth in this area and to redistribute some of this growth around the other large towns and villages of East Devon. In terms of the West End the following levels of growth are now proposed:
- 6,000 houses at Cranbrook (an increase from 5000 in the preferred options document)
 - 800 houses to the north of Pinhoe and 3 hectares of employment (the same as in the preferred options document)
 - 600 houses north of Blackhorse (a reduction from 2,200 houses in the preferred options document)

The proposals for the Science Park, Skypark and the Intermodal Freight Depot site remain; as has additional employment land at Exeter Airport. There has however been a reduction in the overall scale of employment development proposed in the West End.

- 6.5 In a section of the Local Plan regarding the policy options adopted for the West End the District Council state:

“The Council and partners have had a long term policy of accommodating strategic development in the West End of East Devon. There have been objections to the scale of proposed development but the strategy is regarded as remaining sound. We have though reduced overall housing and employment allocation for the West End with an emphasis on promoting delivery of the Cranbrook New Community and the key strategic employment sites of Skypark and the Science Park.”

7 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXETER

- 7.1 There can be little doubt that the balanced expansion of Exeter requires additional development in and around the land adjoining the eastern boundary of the City. This location for additional development would tie in with the strategic allocations at Monkerton and Newcourt set out in the Exeter Core Strategy. There are also significant infrastructure and sustainable development advantages and benefits to be secured with a comprehensive development in this location. This area for growth has its genesis as far back as the County Structure Plan and has remained a constant theme throughout the work carried out for the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) the latest version of which gave a figure of 11,500 as being the requirement for this area with 7,500 of these being in Cranbrook. The figure of 7,400 houses in this latest document therefore represents a significant reduction of that deemed necessary to support the prosperity of the sub regional according to the RSS evidence base. A substantial and sustainable development in the West End of East Devon District is of fundamental importance in the future growth of the City and should be supported as a concept by the City Council. The proposed Local Plan seeks to maintain a substantial element of growth in the West End in the face of considerable local opposition to such growth. It is also important to recognise however that the new legislation allows local authorities to set their own appropriate

levels of growth unconstrained by regional plan totals. The allocations north of Pinhoe and at Blackhorse provide alternative housing options to Cranbrook and probably aid overall delivery but both of these sites could pose substantial physical and social infrastructure problems within the City boundary and will need sensitive and careful planning.

- 7.2 The local plan as presently drafted envisages that the Blackhorse allocations would come forward towards the end the plan period. The development of the land around Blackhorse would bring about significant infrastructure improvements to serve both the strategic allocations within the City boundary and for the wider “west end” area. The purpose of phasing Blackhorse towards the latter part of the plan period appears to be so as to not detract from early and continued development of the Cranbrook allocation. This stance is arguable however and the City Council may want to take the view that Blackhorse should come forward rather more quickly so as to maximise infrastructure delivery, including the strategic road network for the benefit of the sub region as a whole.

8 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 8.1 The City Council welcomes the recognition in the Draft Local Plan of the need to support the balanced growth of Exeter for the benefit of the sub region. The City Council also welcomes and supports the policy option to promote substantial development in the “West End” of the District. The Council view with some concern however the continued reduction in the scale of such growth and would urge again that such growth should be maximised in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, infrastructure provision and deliverability. The earlier release of the Blackhorse allocation than presently envisaged would the City Council feel achieve a greater maximisation of Infrastructure benefits and do little to inhibit the development of Cranbrook. The City Council would wish to continue to participate in joint working to produce a coordinated and comprehensive development to the east of Exeter.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT/RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Planning Member Working Group is asked to note and support this report which will form the basis of the response to Teignbridge and East Devon District Councils.
- 9.2 Executive is asked to agree the proposed response to Teignbridge District Council set out in paragraph 5.1 and the response to East Devon District Council outlined in paragraph 8.1.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None