

## 2.0 LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

2.1 Exeter is an historic Cathedral and University City and is a business, legal, retail, administrative, tourist and commercial centre for the region. It is relatively prosperous with a high quality of life and is located in an environmentally attractive area. The City has potential to capitalise on its education and locational advantages and to exploit its well established economic base, physical infrastructure and telecommunication links. However, like many small cities, Exeter is susceptible to globalisation and technological change. Alongside the growth of personal and collective wealth, areas of social and economic exclusion, poor health and educational under-attainment have developed.

2.2 To address the issues a partnership of people representing the social, voluntary and economic sectors have been brought together by the City Council and have set out a 'Vision' for the future of the City. Exeter Vision identifies the need to focus on ten key themes:-

- a prosperous City;
- an accessible City;
- an electronic City;
- a cultural and fun place to be;
- a learning City;
- a City of strong communities;
- a City where everyone has a home;
- a City where people are healthy and active;
- a City where the environment is cared for;
- a safe City.

2.3 These themes reflect the four main aims of the Government's 'strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom':

- (i) maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- (ii) social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- (iii) effective protection of the environment; and
- (iv) prudent use of natural resources.

2.4 The Local Plan First Review aims to assist Exeter Vision and the Council's Economic Development Strategy in meeting these challenges by providing a wide range of development opportunities particularly for employment, housing, shopping and commercial leisure, but without damaging those environmental assets that, to a large extent, generate the opportunities and pressures for growth. The policies and proposals of the First Review will also complement and support the Council's existing and emerging corporate strategies for the City Centre; Transport; Environment; Housing; Tourism; Culture; Community Safety; Air Quality; Allotments; Leisure; and Social Inclusion.

2.5 The Local Plan First Review recognises that in Exeter a high quality of the built and natural environment is the foundation on which a healthy economy is built. The overriding aim of the Local Plan First Review is, through sustainable development, to secure the prosperity of the City and to enhance the quality of life of its citizens.

2.6 This means that, wherever possible, development should take place on previously-developed land within the urban area and particularly within existing centres, where there are local facilities and a choice of transport, and that the opportunities to use means of transport other than the car are enhanced. A reduction in the use of the car is important because of the potential environmental benefits, particularly through improvement in air quality and the conservation of finite fuel resources, and it is important for business through reduced traffic congestion.

2.7 The reality is, however, that brownfield opportunities in Exeter are limited. The release of some land beyond the built up area is inevitable, both for housing and employment. The plan provides for over 70% of housing on previously-developed land but the City is too densely developed to achieve more, particularly if a range of sites and a variety of housing is to be achieved. Similarly, a range of suitable sites for economic development is essential to deal with structural change and to develop and exploit new technologies. Land must be set aside for knowledge based industries to generate sustainable jobs and ensure the long term prosperity of the City. The Plan seeks to enable such developments by identifying sites which meet the essential and particular locational requirements of these businesses and ensuring that they are supported by measures to provide a genuine choice of access by public transport, walking and cycling.

2.8 Taking all of these matters into account, a sequential approach has been applied, in the First Review, to the selection of sites for office, retail and commercial leisure development. First preference is the City Centre, then edge-of-centre, district and local centres, and finally out-of-centre sites, limiting the expansion onto greenfield as much as possible. For retail and commercial leisure, a location close to other similar uses is important. For office development the approach takes into account the availability of a choice of transport. Industrial and storage uses are treated as an exception to this approach because, normally, they cannot be satisfactorily accommodated in the existing centres. The sequential approach will not be applied again to individual sites already allocated within the Plan when planning permission is sought.

2.9 Housing sites have been identified based on achieving the maximum use of previously-developed land but to meet housing needs some greenfield land has also been allocated. This greenfield land is released on the basis that development will take the form of sustainable urban extensions and is to be made available for infrastructure provision and development as early as possible so that they can contribute to meeting housing requirements throughout the plan period.

2.10 The sequential approach will be applied to all proposals for major trip generating developments on unallocated land.

## Key Objectives

2.11 Accordingly, the key objectives of the Local Plan First Review are:

- (i) to balance the need to stimulate growth and regeneration of the City and enhance Exeter's regional and sub- regional role with the need to protect the quality of the environment and to minimise car travel;
- (ii) to provide all the citizens of Exeter with a decent home, including those in need of affordable or special housing and those who require executive housing;
- (iii) to make full and effective use of land within the urban area, whilst avoiding town cramming;
- (iv) to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the existing City centre, district centres and local centres;
- (v) to locate key town centre uses in existing centres which are highly accessible by means other than the private car and where there may be advantages in enabling one journey to serve several purposes;
- (vi) to improve the choice of travel mode so that people can walk, cycle or catch public transport, rather than drive, between home and those facilities which they need to visit regularly;
- (vii) to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness through high quality design;
- (viii) to conserve land and energy resources, reduce pollution and noise, protect the natural and built heritage and contribute to the conservation of the abundance and diversity of wildlife and its habitats.

2.12 Policies AP1 and AP2 provide the basis on which the allocations in the Plan have been made and set out the key tests against which new proposals will be judged.

**AP1: DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE DESIGNED AND LOCATED TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF THE URBAN AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND REDUCE THE NEED FOR CAR TRAVEL. PROPOSALS SHOULD BE LOCATED WHERE SAFE AND CONVENIENT ACCESS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WALKING AND CYCLING IS AVAILABLE OR CAN BE PROVIDED.**

**AP2: PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO MEETING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ON PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED LAND AND WITHIN EXISTING CENTRES. A SEQUENTIAL APPROACH WILL BE APPLIED TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF NEW SITES FOR OFFICE, HOUSING (SEE POLICY H1), RETAIL (SEE POLICY S1) AND COMMERCIAL LEISURE USE.**



## 3.0 EMPLOYMENT

### Objectives

- to create the conditions necessary to stimulate the local economy and to protect jobs;
- to ensure that new development is compatible with the objectives of sustainable development

3.1 Exeter is recognised as an important business, retail and administrative centre for the surrounding region and has a particularly strong presence in public sector and service activities, including the headquarters of the South West Regional Development Agency and Regional Chamber and the relocation of the Met Office from Bracknell. The City also provides important real estate, legal and financial services and is a centre for the motor trade. However, the City lacks a strong presence in many higher level business services and faces the challenge of continued population growth, technological change (which affects decisions on business location and consumer shopping patterns), social change, particularly the growth of part-time working, and declining accessibility as traffic levels steadily rise.

3.2 There is, therefore, a clear need to create a stronger, more diverse local economy whilst maintaining and improving environmental quality. The aim is to build on educational and professional services, to attract and enable the growth of knowledge based industries (by for example encouraging demand for, and use of, new information and communication technologies), and to develop the skills base. In other words to create the circumstances in which proposals that focus on the specific needs of the City (such as the Innovation Centre at the University) can be brought forward and will flourish. In this regard the relocation of the Met Office to Exeter is likely to have a significant beneficial impact.

3.3 Through its Economic Development Strategy, the Council aims to meet these challenges by bringing forward a range of economic initiatives. The Local Plan complements the Strategy by integrating environmental and economic objectives and providing a choice of sites to meet the economic development needs of the City. Both documents recognise that careful attention to environmental issues makes good economic sense for business and industry.

### Strategic Guidance

3.4 Government policy (Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: General Policy and Principles, February 1997) expresses the need to encourage continued economic development and to meet the locational needs of businesses but policies should also ensure that new development is compatible with the objectives of sustainable development.

## Employment

3.5 Regional Planning Guidance states that Exeter should develop its role as:

- the main commercial and service centre for the central part of the region; and
- a focal point for strategic economic investment, having regard to the need to expand and diversify the local economy and economic base.

3.6 The RPG supports the continuing development of Exeter's sub regional role in order to help to spread economic development down the region but to do this will depend on securing adequate land supply particularly for economic development and capitalising on the opportunities offered to the east of the City. This should be achieved whilst ensuring that the City's historic character and high quality environment is preserved.

3.7 The Structure Plan First Review recognises the strategic importance and potential of the City by allocating 100 hectares of employment land to be provided for in Exeter between 1995 and 2011 and identifying a further 40 hectares to the east of the City boundary at Skypark, adjoining Exeter Airport, for prestige development.

### Employment Land

3.8 For the purposes of the Local Plan First Review, employment land is defined as all land and buildings which are used or designated for purposes within Use Class B1 (business), Class B2 (general industrial), and Class B8 (storage or distribution). On Marsh Barton/Matford, car showrooms are regarded as an acceptable use of employment land (see 3.26).

3.9 The Structure Plan First Review provides for 100 hectares of employment land between 1995 and 2011. The provision at the 1st April 2004 is:

	Area (hectares)
Completions 1995-2004	60.2
Land with Planning Permission at 1st April 2004	27.4
Total	87.6
<b>Residual</b> (100 hectares requirement - 87.6 hectares provision)	<b>12.4</b>

3.10 Part of the residual, identified above, will be met by sites which, at 1 April 2004, have the benefit of a Council resolution to grant planning permission, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Obligation: These sites will take up some 3.7 hectares.

3.11 For the purposes of assessing whether the Structure Plan employment land requirements have been met, the City Centre sites are excluded. The County Council regard them as redevelopment sites which replace existing jobs rather than contribute to new jobs and, therefore, do not count against Structure Plan allocations. These are considered separately.

3.12 Overall some 22.2 hectares are proposed on new sites. Together with completions and permissions and land with a resolution to grant permission subject to a Section 106 Obligation, this provides a total of 113.5 hectares which represents a surplus of 13.5 hectares above the Structure Plan First Review allocation. The surplus is mainly a consequence of providing for a major strategic employment site (see 3.14).

3.13 Previously developed sites have been identified wherever suitable:

- (i) specific allocations for office development in the City Centre where good public transport is available, including access to mainline rail stations and the bus and coach station; and
- (ii) the development of vacant land on the industrial estates.

#### South of the A379

3.14 Regional Planning Guidance for the South West advises that Principal Urban Areas such as Exeter should consider the provision of a strategic employment site to meet the needs of major business users, and this provision should be a minimum size of 12 hectares. The City Council recognises that, as a regional capital, Exeter must be able to provide prestige sites in a high quality setting. The relocation of the Met Office to land west of Exeter Business Park means that there are few significant sites remaining to accommodate major inward investment. The City Council wishes to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Met Office relocation and to fully exploit the strong established links with the University, particularly the establishment and expansion of the Innovation Centre. In view of the size requirements and the need to be well related to the motorway, provision for a strategic employment site for science and technology is made on greenfield land south of the A379

3.15 The employment allocation south of the A379 is brought forward on the basis that the land will only be released for knowledge based industries (particularly high demand users of information and communication technologies) as these industries are strategically essential to ensure Exeter's future competitiveness. Strict landscape and design control will be applied which will require a quality of development normally only appropriate for a science and technology park.

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3.16 The Structure Plan Alteration 2001-2016 proposes a science park adjoining the City boundary in East Devon. If this is brought forward this would replace the need for a science park at Newcourt. However, the allocation at Newcourt must be retained until there is certainty that the East Devon proposal will be delivered.

### Exeter Business Park/Sowton

3.17 At April 2004, some 1.9 hectares remain for employment development to the west of Exeter Business Park and 2 hectares remain to the east of Exeter Business Park. A further 0.5 hectares are proposed at Osprey Road, Sowton.

### Pinhoe

3.18 At Pinhoe all heavy goods vehicles to and from the industrial estate, north of the railway, must travel through local residential roads because of limitations on the Chancel Lane bridge. This has caused considerable problems for the amenity of local residents and provides poor access for business.

3.19 To the east of the Istock works, on the industrial estate, land is held for expansion of the brickworks but may, through rationalisation, be used for general employment purposes. To the west of the brickworks and to the south east of Eastern Fields, some 5.4 hectares are proposed for further industrial development. To resolve the traffic problems in the area these developments will only be permitted if they secure access from Exhibition Way and carry out necessary highway improvements along Exhibition Way and at the junction with Pinhoe Road.

3.20 The land at Eastern Fields forms part of an open area of green space which is much valued by local residents and is only allocated, exceptionally and specifically, to help resolve the access difficulties. In view of the site's location close to the Exeter Arena athletics stadium the land could alternatively be developed for indoor leisure.

3.21 Access to the land adjoining the brickworks requires a link through to the industrial estate (the line of the link road is safeguarded under Policy T14) but the provision of the link road, although desirable to resolve the traffic problems in the area, is not essential to secure access to the Eastern Fields site. It is recognised, however, that, due to the highway costs, the development of each of the sites in isolation is unlikely to be viable and that joint arrangements will be necessary. Minor intensification of the brickworks expansion site could, if appropriate, be dealt with by way of financial contributions to the infrastructure works.



## Summary

3.22 Taking into account the above sites, the employment land allocations to meet the Structure Plan First Review requirement of 100 hectares are as follows:

	Area (hectares)
Completions 1995 -2004	60.2
Land with planning permission at 1st April 2004	27.4
Land with a resolution to grant planning permission, at 1st April 2004, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Obligation	3.7
Local Plan allocations at 1st April 2004	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>113.5</b>

E1: THE FOLLOWING SITES ARE PROPOSED FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT:

	SITE	AREA (HECTARES)	SITE CONSIDERATIONS
1.	SOUTH OF THE A379 (KEY PROPOSAL 8)	12.4	Release of this land will be subject to the signing of a legal agreement which will limit the development to 'science and technology' users. Developers must ensure that the site is accessible by a choice of transport, set out a green travel plan and include measures to mitigate any undesirable impact on the environment. Access to the site from the A379 and emergency access only through adjacent housing land.
2.	WEST OF EXETER BUSINESS PARK	1.9	
3.	EAST OF EXETER BUSINESS PARK	2.0	

## Employment

4.	OSPREY ROAD, SOWTON	0.5	
5.	WEST OF IBSTOCK BRICKWORKS, PINHOE	2.1	Permission for major initial or incremental intensification of use of the brickworks and for employment development adjoining the brickworks will be subject to the developers constructing an access spine road to the industrial estate, north of the railway from Exhibition Way and carrying out the necessary highway improvements along Exhibition Way and at the junction with Pinhoe Road.
6.	EASTERN FIELDS (SOUTH EAST)	3.3	Permission for employment/indoor leisure development at Eastern Fields will be subject to the developers constructing an access road to the site from Exhibition Way and carrying out the necessary highway improvements along Exhibition Way and at the junction with Pinhoe Road.

**Total 22.2**

## City Centre Office/Business Development

3.23 New office development raises the profile of Exeter for business and financial services. Office development can normally be accommodated in the City Centre, where good public transport facilities are available, without detriment to its historic character. The Local Plan First Review, therefore, focuses on high quality office locations in the City Centre which are appropriate to Exeter's role as a regional and sub regional centre. Major office development is under way at Southernhay following the completion of the Crown Courts and permission for office development has been granted at Station Yard, Queen Street. Further office floorspace is proposed on the area fronting St. Davids Station together with housing and local centre retail units (see Key Proposal 5).

**E2: LAND AT ST DAVIDS STATION IS PROPOSED FOR OFFICE/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT. PERMISSION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF 0.40 HECTARES (APPROXIMATELY 7,600 SQ. METRES) IS CONTINGENT UPON MAINTAINING THE EXISTING LEVEL OF PARKING PROVISION FOR THE STATION. THE DESIGN OF THE BUILDING SHOULD ENHANCE THIS GATEWAY TO THE CITY.**

3.24 Any further proposals for office development in the City Centre, in addition to the above, will be subject to the sequential approach (see Policy AP2). There may be opportunities as part of mixed development on previously used land but, in view of the extent of housing needs, the suitability of a site for housing will be considered as a first priority.

### Retention of Employment Land or Premises

3.25 In order to provide a range of employment sites, particularly for inward investment, and the need to limit development of greenfield land, it is vital that existing employment sites and premises, which are viable for continued employment use, are retained and that sites proposed for employment use are safeguarded. This applies as much to City Centre office sites as it does to the employment land which counts against Structure Plan requirements (see 3.11). Exceptions may be made where the loss of employment land or premises would not cause harm to business or employment opportunities.

3.26 Subject to the above, the Council recognises that many employment areas would benefit from the provision of some local services, which should otherwise be located in the existing centres. This would assist the workforce, be attractive to inward investors seeking a suitable location and would reduce the need to travel by car. Local services are defined as dentists, doctors, chemists, child care, post offices, cash points and kiosks selling newspapers, sandwiches etc. Proposals should be centrally located within the local employment area. To ensure the development is limited to serving local needs there should be a maximum floorspace of 1000m<sup>2</sup>, subdivided into small units. The acceptance of such uses does not set a precedent for other uses. Permission will only be granted if the additional local services are proven not to be already suitably provided within the area.

3.27 On Marsh Barton/Matford the sale of motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts and accessories will also be regarded as an acceptable use of employment land. These uses, which have a significant employment character, are well established in this area and their concentration serves to limit car travel. Where permission is granted for car showrooms, it will be limited by conditions to the use proposed. The acceptance of such uses only applies at Marsh Barton/Matford because of the travel benefits which are achieved through concentration.

3.28 The Council also recognises that, in view of changes in the economy and the needs of business, further flexibility may be appropriate in respect of the temporary alternative use of vacant industrial premises. The length of temporary use must be sufficient to enable viable proposals to come forward and will be considered against the availability of industrial premises in the City and in the light of the particular circumstances of a site, including the period remaining on the lease. As in respect of local services, permission for temporary alternative use does not imply a lack of commitment to employment use and does not imply the identification of additional land elsewhere to meet employment targets.

## Employment

**E3: THE LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND OR PREMISES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE IT WOULD HARM BUSINESS OR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREA.**

### **Exeter University Campus**

3.29 The character and setting of the University derives from its location on prominent hill slopes northwest of the City Centre. The wooded grassland of the Lower Hoopern Valley effectively separates the main area of academic buildings from residential development to the south. To the north the ridgeline at Belvidere Road provides a backdrop. These strong physical features create a distinct sense of place. The landscape around and within the campus is a significant unifying feature. Many of the buildings are of townscape merit. Within this setting the University may, over the plan period, wish to provide further education uses and student housing and further research and development initiatives including ancillary production, building on the success of the Innovation Centre. The City Council will support such proposals provided the development will respect and enhance the landscape setting and character of the campus, taking into account the presence of existing mature trees, listed buildings and other locally significant buildings. The amenity of nearby buildings must also be protected. Provision must be made for adequate car parking or for alternative transport arrangements to meet the needs of the campus as a whole.

**E4: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION USES, STUDENT HOUSING AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, INCLUDING ANCILLARY PRODUCTION, WILL BE PERMITTED ON THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER CAMPUS PROVIDED THAT THE CHARACTER AND SETTING OF THE CAMPUS IS PROTECTED.**

### **Employment Use in Residential Areas**

3.30 Home working is likely to increase over the plan period as people take advantage of electronics and information technology. Planning permission is not normally required for home working unless the use ceases to be ancillary to the residential use or people are employed at the premises who do not live there. If the proposal involves the loss of a dwelling, permission will not be granted. Where the business use is no longer ancillary but a dwelling unit is retained or where planning permission is otherwise required, the Council will consider whether the use causes an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents, such as through increased parking. Permission may be granted where the impact can be regulated by attaching appropriate conditions which control the hours of working, storage, access etc.

3.31 Workshops such as electrical appliance repairs can provide an essential local service in residential areas. They are a valuable source of employment and can reduce the need to travel but they need to be carefully sited to protect residential amenity and should not involve the loss of dwellings. Each proposal will be assessed with regard to the scale and hours of operation and conditions will be imposed to alleviate adverse and environmental effects. Proposals involving motor vehicle repairs, panel beating and spraying are not considered to be acceptable in residential areas.

E5: PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR BUSINESS USE FROM RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES AND FOR SMALL WORKSHOPS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS PROVIDED THAT:

- (a) THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT (SUBJECT TO POLICY H5) INVOLVE THE LOSS OF DWELLINGS OR LOSS OF AMENITY;
- (b) THERE WILL BE NO ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE SAFETY OF LOCAL ROADS AND THE USE WILL NOT RESULT IN A LOSS OF ESSENTIAL OFF STREET RESIDENTIAL PARKING AND WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE ON STREET PARKING.

### **Cultural Activity**

3.32 The City Council recognises the need to sustain a lively cultural sector because it enhances the quality of life and image of the City, it raises the profile of the City as a tourist attraction and it provides employment opportunities. The Council aims to promote the City as a regional centre for the arts and will, in particular, support the plans by the University of Exeter to upgrade the Great Hall and the Northcott Theatre, support the Phoenix Arts Centre and continue to manage and revitalise the Museum service. The integration of public art in the design of new development and environmental schemes will be encouraged (see 13.54).

## Employment