

## 4.0 HOUSING

### Objectives

- to provide all the members of the community with the opportunity of a decent home;
- to anticipate and provide for housing needs arising from the City's economic growth and its increasing importance as a regional capital;
- to widen housing opportunity and choice, secure a better mix of house types and tenures than is currently available and seek to create mixed and inclusive communities, including providing for those in need of affordable or special housing and those requiring executive housing;
- to maximise the re-use of previously-developed land in the urban area, bring back empty homes into use and promote the conversion of existing buildings;
- to improve accessibility of public transport between homes, jobs, shops, education, health and social care and leisure facilities, local services and local amenities, and to facilitate walking and cycling;
- to promote good design in order to create attractive, high quality living environments in which people will choose to live.

4.1 Over the plan period to 2011 there is likely to be limited population growth in Exeter compared with steady growth in the region around the City. The slow growth in Exeter's population reflects balanced rates of births, deaths, in-migration and emigration. However, this masks the fact that death rates are falling, (resulting in longevity) as are birth rates. Strong in-migration in the 16-24 age group (students and young people leaving rural homes for work and rented accommodation) is more than matched by emigration in the 25-39 age group (qualified people leaving the area for improved work opportunities and young couples leaving the city to bring up families in the country). The biggest growth area is in the middle aged group moving into the City to access the service base and fill skill shortages in the local labour market. The population will, therefore, become dominated by the 16-24 and 45-60 age groups. Overall the population is ageing.

4.2 Changes in the structure of the population are likely to have an impact on housing choice in the years to come. In recognition of this, the Council's Housing Strategy aims to ensure that there are enough well designed and maintained homes for the people of Exeter. The Strategy aims to ensure that the existing housing stock is adapted and improved and an increase in the size of the housing stock is encouraged to provide a range of housing (and support services) of all sizes, types and tenure to meet identified needs.

## Housing

### Strategic Guidance

4.3 The aim of Government policy (Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing) is, that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home, there should be greater choice of housing and housing should not reinforce social distinctions. The housing needs of all in the community should be recognised and the focus for additional housing should be existing towns and cities.

4.4 Regional Planning Guidance for the period up to 2016 advises that Exeter should make provision for additional housing to support its enhanced role as a focal point for strategic economic investment. The Structure Plan First Review allocates 6,000 houses to be provided in the City between 1995 and 2011 and advises that maximum advantage should be taken of previously-developed land. Recognising that there is limited capacity within the City to accommodate further growth, a new community is proposed to the east of the City. The East Devon Local Plan allocates 2,900 dwellings to be provided at the new community by 2011.

### Location Priorities

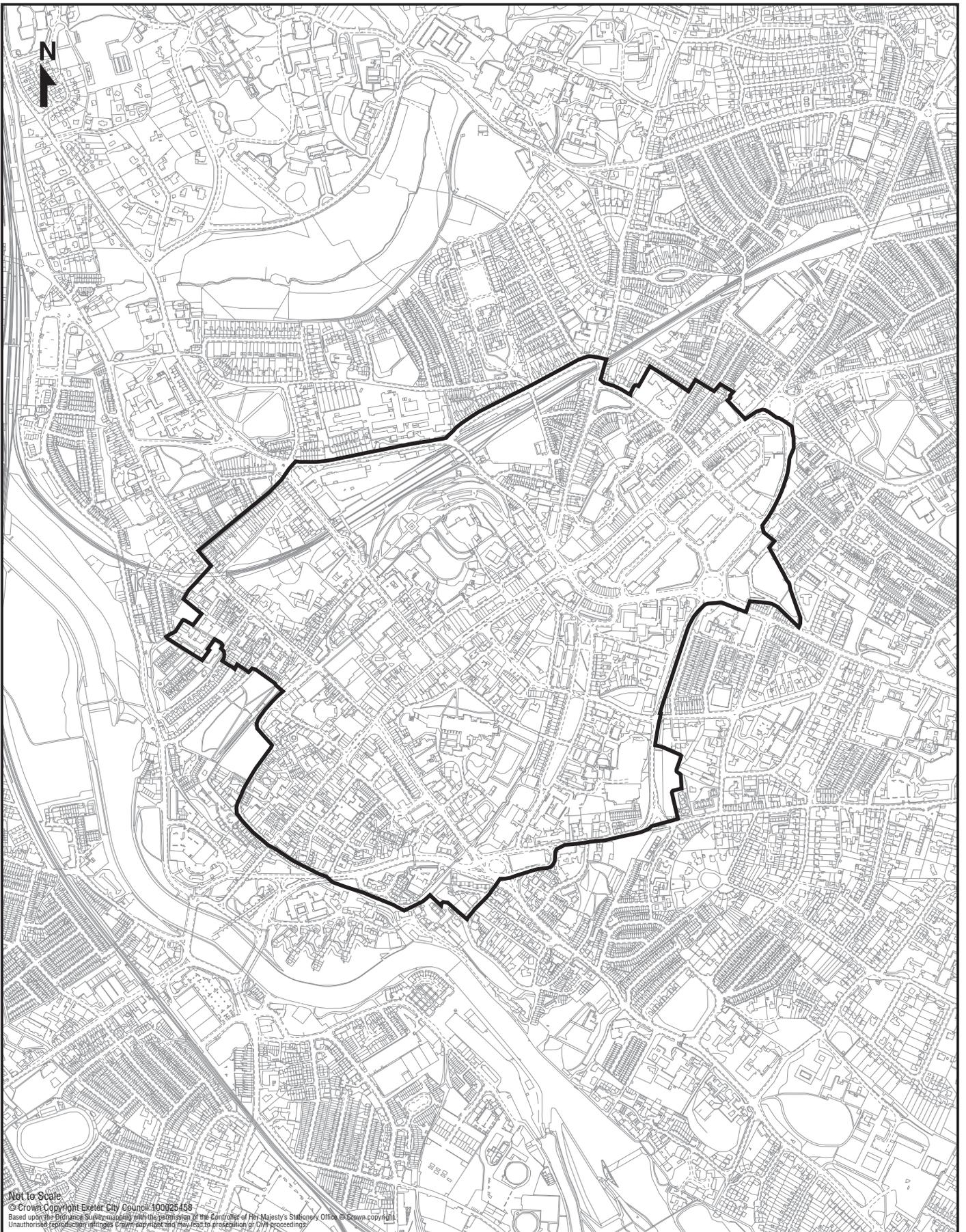
4.5 In accordance with Government guidance the Council has identified sites for development by following a search sequence: starting with the re-use of previously-developed land, conversions and infill within the urban area; followed by previously-developed land on the urban fringe within public transport corridors; and only then, greenfield land through urban extensions within public transport corridors.

4.6 Potential sites have been assessed against the criteria set out in PPG3, Para 31:

- the availability of previously-developed sites and empty or under used buildings;
- the location and accessibility of sites to jobs, shops and services by means other than the car;
- the capacity of existing and potential infrastructure;
- the ability to build communities; and
- the physical and environmental constraints on development of land.

4.7 To reduce the need to travel, the development of housing in areas which are well served by public transport is particularly important. These include the City Centre and areas which are within 400 metres of district centres; or within 400 metres of bus routes connecting to the City Centre which have a minimum of 4 buses per hour running between 8.00 am and 5.45 p.m. on weekdays; or within 800 metres of a rail station/halt with a service at least every half hour.

4.8 Within the core area of the City Centre (see Plan 1), where shopping, employment, and other facilities are within easy walking distance, developers may consider the option of providing housing without off street parking. The experience of recent car free schemes in the City Centre, which have involved the conversion and extension of existing buildings, suggests that few parking difficulties will arise provided that opportunities to park elsewhere are limited by on-street parking restrictions. Occupiers will be excluded from residents parking schemes and should be made aware of the parking limitations before purchase. Provision will still be made



Plan 1:

Housing Core Area: H2

## Housing

for people with disabilities and for deliveries. Opportunities to achieve car free developments will be considered on their merits. A contribution will, however, be sought towards the enhancement of facilities for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

4.9 These car free developments offer more space, greater safety, more attractive surroundings, a stronger community focus, less noise and less pollution than conventional housing. They are an option for people who wish to live in an area without the intrusion of private motor vehicles and who are willing to accept the conditions of occupation.

4.10 If an acceptable residential environment can be provided, housing is also possible through the conversion of vacant buildings. This could include historic buildings, office floorspace which is unsuitable for market requirements and space above offices and shops. There is also potential to include housing in new office and retail schemes on upper floors. To ensure maximum flexibility new office buildings should be designed, where practical, to allow subsequent conversion to residential.

4.11 These initiatives will enable increased housing densities to be achieved. In recent years residential development in Exeter has achieved approximately 35 dwellings per hectare gross. Higher densities will be sought through careful and innovative design and proposals which do not maximise the use of limited land resources will not be permitted. Careful design is the key. A proposal which would harm the character of a neighbourhood through excessive density or poor design will be refused. The aim is not to increase densities at any cost but to secure a more sustainable pattern of development, which may include a mix of land uses, whilst retaining the character and quality of the local environment. To achieve this, proposals must accord with the general guidance on development set out in the policies on design, landscape, conservation and the environment.

4.12 The Government (PPG 3: Housing) advises that densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net should be achieved (for definition of net density see glossary). Although a relatively low gross density is achieved on the two major housing sites at Digby and Newcourt, (due to the provision of infrastructure, community facilities and schools), the overall net density of the proposals set out in Policy H3 is between 32 and 37 dwellings per hectare. Site densities will be monitored to ensure that the Plan remains in accordance with PPG3 guidance.

### H1: PROPOSALS FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ASSESSED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING SEARCH SEQUENCE:

- (i) PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED LAND, CONVERSIONS AND INFILL WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS;
- (ii) PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED LAND ON THE URBAN FRINGE WITHIN PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORRIDORS;
- (iii) GREENFIELD LAND THROUGH SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSIONS WITHIN PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORRIDORS.

H2: PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO MEETING HOUSING NEEDS ON PREVIOUSLY-DEVELOPED LAND BY APPLYING THE SEARCH SEQUENCE SET OUT IN POLICY H1 AND BY PERMITTING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE HIGHEST DENSITY THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO LOCAL AMENITY, THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE SAFETY OF LOCAL ROADS, WHILST HAVING REGARD TO THE NEED TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF HOUSING PROVISION WHICH IS ACCESSIBLE TO A RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT, SHOPPING, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES. DEVELOPERS SHOULD CONSIDER:

- (a) THE PROVISION OF SEMI-DETACHED AND TERRACED HOUSING AND FLATS;
- (b) THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFILL AND CORNER SITES;
- (c) DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY CENTRE AND IN AREAS WHICH ARE WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT;
- (d) DEVELOPMENT OF SITES IN THE CORE AREA OF THE CITY CENTRE WITHOUT PROVISION FOR MOTOR VEHICLE PARKING BUT WITH SECURE CYCLE PARKING FACILITIES, CAR PARKING PROVISION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AND SPACE FOR DELIVERIES;
- (e) THE CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS TO FLATS OR BEDSITS;
- (f) THE CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL USE OF BUILDINGS, WHICH ARE VACANT, UNDER-USED OR IN POOR CONDITION, INCLUDING HISTORIC BUILDINGS, OFFICES AND VACANT FLOORSPACE ABOVE OFFICES AND SHOPS;
- (g) THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW OFFICE BUILDINGS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ENABLE SUBSEQUENT CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL USE;
- (h) THE PROVISION OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IN UPPER FLOORS OF RETAIL AND OFFICE SCHEMES.

## Housing

### Housing Allocations

4.13 The Structure Plan First Review provides for 6,000 dwellings between 1995 and 2011. The housing requirement takes into account population projections, social and demographic change and in-migration and assumes a 10% reduction in vacancy rates to 2011. The provision at the 1st April 2004 is:

Completions 1995-2004	Dwellings 3,779
Land with planning permission at 1st April 2004	1,778
Total	5,557
<b>Residual</b> (6,000 dwellings requirement – 5,557 dwellings provision)	<b>433</b>

4.14 Part of the residual above will be met by the following 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 provide some 205 dwellings.

4.15 The City Council has carried out an Urban Capacity Study to assess the extent to which new greenfield sites will be required. This study has involved:-

- (i) a review of the availability and capacity of all existing local plan sites;
- (ii) identification and assessment of capacity of potential new sites within the built up area;
- (iii) evaluation of capacity through infill, 'living over the shop' and conversion.

### Existing Sites/ Brownfield Allocations

4.16 Existing and potential sites were appraised to ensure that they are economically feasible, that a comfortable residential environment can be achieved and that any potential traffic problems can be overcome. Some existing sites were deleted because they appear unlikely to come forward. The potential on each site was then assessed on the basis of:

- (i) applying densities currently achieved under existing policy standards;
- (ii) applying alternative house types or reduced parking standards where this would not cause adverse impact on the local residential environment.

4.17 This appraisal, updated to 2004, has revealed that approximately 145-155 dwellings can be carried forward from the Local Plan Second Alteration (see Table 1) and a further 740 - 911 can be provided on new sites within the built-up area (see

Table 2) to achieve a total provision of 995 – 1066 dwellings. The dwelling capacities are estimates which are based on an assumption of the type of development that may be appropriate on each site but this does not rule out other options. The figures are, therefore, provided for guidance and to indicate the extent to which strategic requirements are met.

Table 1 : Local Plan Second Alteration Housing Sites Carried Forward

Site	Area (hectares)	Site Information	Site capacity (dwellings)
Queen Street/ Richmond Road	1.19	Suitable for flats and terraced housing, possibly a car free development.	70-80
Episcopal School/ Dinham Road	0.71	Capacity based on conversion and new build.	35
Allotment Gardens, Marypole Road	1.80	Greenfield site. The rationalisation and relocation of allotments on this site, to enable part of the land to be released for housing, is subject to the preparation of an allotment strategy for the City which will determine the extent of allotment needs. Pending the completion of the strategy, the site is allocated for housing/allotments.	40
<b>Total</b>			<b>145-155</b>

Table 2 : New Housing Sites Within The Built-Up Area

Site	Area (hectares)	Site Information	Site Capacity (dwellings)
Yeo and Davey, Old Tiverton Road	0.41	Suitable for terraced housing or town houses and flats.	15-35
Topsham Middle School, Parkfield Road	0.41	Development could include the conversion of some of the buildings on the site together with newbuild. Access to the site is achieved via Parkfield Road. The site lies within the Topsham Conservation Area. Careful design required. Suitable for sheltered	10-20

## Housing

		accommodation or a low rise high density car free development.	
Wyvern Barracks, Barrack Road	1.67	Surplus land including playing fields to the rear of Wyvern Barracks. Access to the site achieved from Dryden Road.	18-33
HMS Pellew, Dryden Road	0.88	MoD land surplus to military requirements. Suitable for residential use but development potential is constrained by shape of site. Access to the site achieved from Dryden Road.	30-35
Exeter Coldstore, Chancel Lane	2.02	Underused industrial site.	60-100
Royal Mail, Bonhay Road	0.4	Currently in industrial use. Suitable for terraced housing or flats.	12-20
Quay/Canal Basin Area		Part of a mixed-use development including leisure, retail and offices.	70
Fire Station, Howell Road	0.36	Redevelopment of site, currently used as fire station, following proposed relocation.	10-18
RNSD (Upper Site)/Land adjoining Newcourt House	15.05	To be developed in association with land north of Old Rydon Lane (see 4.26-4.28).	315-380
RNSD (Lower Site)	7.01	To be developed in accordance with a comprehensive plan for the area to include adjoining land to the east (see 4.28) together with the middle and upper RNSD sites and land north of Old Rydon Lane (see Key Proposal 8).	200
<b>Total</b>			<b>740-911</b>

## Windfalls

4.18 In addition to the identified sites an important contribution to meeting requirements will come from the development of previously-developed land or the conversion of buildings but these cannot readily be identified. The Urban Capacity Study has assessed the ‘windfall’ capacity by examining the potential for infill,

‘living over the shop’ and conversions. Further capacity could be achieved through the redevelopment of employment land in the Water Lane area (see Key Proposal 6). This is dependant on relocation by the current occupiers and no specific sites are identified.

4.19 The scope for infill was considered by examining potential in the City Centre, district centres and local centres and in low density areas. This revealed that although the low density areas would appear to have potential because of the presence of large gardens, they have no track record of infill and are unlikely to come forward.

4.20 ‘Living over the Shop’ appears to be common in the district centres and secondary areas of the City Centre but is almost totally absent from the primary shopping area. Potential is therefore, relatively limited because there are few further opportunities in the district centres and the secondary shopping areas apart from the Fore Street/ New Bridge Street area. Space is difficult to achieve in the primary shopping area because often there is no separate access to the upper floors or because of storage needs or because the owners see greater potential in conversion to offices or shop expansion. Moreover there is often a reluctance to enter into mixed management agreements and there are concerns about security.

4.21 The estimates for conversions were based on:

- the intensification of low density areas;
- evidence of take-up rates from areas which have experienced conversion in the past;
- statistics on unimplemented planning permissions;
- analysis of the 1991 Census;
- survey information on vacant office floorspace in older properties or in residential areas; and
- the identification of offices which were previously residential or are part-residential.

4.22 This has demonstrated that the areas which might appear to have the greatest potential, predominantly large terraced housing close to existing centres, have already experienced considerable conversion and that the majority of other large houses are found in suburban estates with little market potential for conversion.

4.23 Based on the above analysis, the contribution to housing targets over the period 2004-2011 from infill, living over the shop and conversions may be of the order of 500 dwellings. This assessment reflects an increased level of windfalls in recent years, current Government guidance to encourage these uses and market interest in pursuing the opportunities. The windfall assessment does not include any allowance for new and redevelopment sites over 0.4 hectares.

## Housing

### Greenfield

4.24 To assess the potential from greenfield land a Landscape Appraisal was carried out of all land within Exeter which is subject to a landscape or valley park designation in the Local Plan First Alteration. Consideration was also given as to whether the greenfield allocations should be dispersed around the fringes of the City or concentrated in one area.

4.25 Land north of Old Rydon Lane was considered at the Inquiry into the Local Plan First Alteration. The Inspector concluded that the area was not of fundamental environmental quality and should be reviewed in the light of future housing requirements. The Local Plan First Review Deposit Draft concluded that the most sustainable option was to concentrate housing development in this area.

4.26 This was re-examined following the publication of Regional Planning Guidance for the South West which included advice on the need to identify land for strategic employment sites either within or close to the Principal Urban Areas. To meet this requirement part of the land north of Old Rydon Lane (south of the A379) is allocated as a science and technology park (see 3.14 – 3.16). The City Council has also taken into account the evidence that St. Bridget Nurseries will not be available for development within the plan period.

4.27 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

4.28 As a result, the housing allocation north of Old Rydon Lane covers some 9.3 hectares which could accommodate approximately 300 dwellings. This should be developed in a comprehensive manner with the adjoining previously-developed RNSD upper and lower sites (see Table 2) and with the science and technology park. The comprehensive approach should also embrace the land immediately to the east of the RNSD lower site, north of Topsham Road. This land is added to the housing development area, to provide approximately a further 50 dwellings, because it offers greater design flexibility for the development of the RNSD lower site and it makes a limited contribution to the landscape setting of the City. Comprehensive development (including phasing, until highway infrastructure is in place, and the provision of a range of community and educational facilities), forms an essential part of the overall spatial strategy for the area to the east of the outer bypass (see 14.31 – 14.33).

4.29 Accordingly the housing land allocations to meet the Structure Plan First Review requirement of 6,000 dwellings are as follows:

	Dwellings
Completions 1995-2004	3779
Land with planning permission at 1st April 2004	1778
Land with a resolution to grant planning permission, at 1st April 2004, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Obligation.	205
Previously developed windfalls	500
Site allocations	1235-1416
	<b>Total 7497-7678</b>
Allowance of 10% for identified sites not coming forward	322-340
<b>Total</b>	<b>7175-7338</b>

4.30 Current Government guidelines state that 60% of additional housing should be provided on previously-developed land or through conversions. Approximately 72% of the total provision set out above is on previously-developed land.

4.31 Policy H3 sets out site considerations to be taken into account. In addition it is likely that investigation of ground contamination will be required on many brownfield sites and remediation works undertaken as necessary.

### Phasing

4.32 PPG3 requires the managed release of housing sites to ensure that previously-developed land in urban areas is developed before greenfield sites. The previously developed sites proposed in Policy H3 are not, therefore, phased and can be developed at any time over the plan period. In addition to the Digby area, greenfield provision focuses mainly on the Newcourt area. This area is brought forward as a sustainable urban extension and forms a key element in the overall spatial strategy for the land between the outer bypass and the motorway (see 14.31–14.33). The development of this land is central to the delivery of the plan objectives. In view of the scale and comprehensive nature of the proposals, the Newcourt area needs to be released for infrastructure provision and development as early as possible so that it can contribute to meeting housing requirements throughout the plan period. Further greenfield sites will only be allocated for development, following local plan review, if previously-developed sites do not come forward as anticipated to meet housing requirements. Monitoring will determine whether a balanced provision of previously-developed sites and greenfield sites is being achieved.

## Housing

H3: THE FOLLOWING SITES ARE PROPOSED FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:

SITE	AREA (HECTARES)	APPROX NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	SITE CONSIDERATIONS
1. QUEEN ST/ RICHMOND ROAD	1.19	70- 80	Access constraints, pedestrian access to Queen Street required. Noise mitigation measures may be necessary.
2. EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, DINHAM ROAD	0.71	35	Access constraints, possible car free development. Located within the St. Davids and Longbrook Conservation Area, conversion and re- development requires careful design.
3. ALLOTMENT GARDENS, MARYPOLE RD	0.80	40	Greenfield site. Allocated as housing/ allotments pending review of allotments.
4. YEO AND DAVEY, OLD TIVERTON ROAD	0.41	15-35	It will be necessary to determine the nature of the provision or contribution towards on or off-site open space or children's play space.
5. TOPSHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL, PARKFIELD ROAD	0.41	10-20	Located within the Topsham Conservation Area, careful design required.

6.	WYVERN BARRACKS, BARRACK ROAD	1.67	18-33	Development of the site should provide for vehicular access from Dryden Road and secure by a Section 106 Obligation the provision on site of about one hectare of public open space fronting Dryden Road, including play space provision and a multi-use games area. Any development should provide for the retention of protected trees and achieve a sensitive relationship between the open space and the adjacent frontages of built development.
7.	HMS PELLEW, DRYDEN ROAD	0.88	30-35	
8.	EXETER COLDSTORE, CHANCEL LANE	2.02	60-100	A Transport Assessment should be submitted.
9.	ROYAL MAIL, BONHAY ROAD	0.40	12-20	Noise mitigation measures may be necessary. Developer contributions may be required for flood defence measures.
10.	QUAY/CANAL BASIN AREA (KEY PROPOSAL 6)	N/A	70	Careful design required to ensure that style and materials are sympathetic to listed buildings and the historic nature of the area.

## Housing

11. FIRE STATION, HOWELL ROAD	0.36	10-18	Site is prominent along a ridgeline. Careful design is required to ensure that new development is integrated into the surrounding area in terms of scale and massing.
12. RNSD UPPER SITE/LAND ADJOINING NEWCOURT HOUSE (KEY PROPOSAL 8)	15.05	315-380	Structure planting and buffer zone required between housing and the railway line.
13. RNSD LOWER SITE/LAND ADJOINING TO THE EAST (KEY PROPOSAL 8)	9.32	250	Development should be undertaken in accordance with a comprehensive plan for the area to include the middle and upper RNSD sites and land north of Old Rydon Lane. Effective landscape treatment is required on the eastern boundary.
14. NORTH OF OLD RYDON LANE (KEY PROPOSAL 8)	9.30	300	Greenfield site to be developed as part of a comprehensive plan for the Newcourt area.
<b>Total</b>		<b>1235-1416</b>	

## Loss of Dwellings

4.33 Residential development comprises the largest single land use in the City. Retention of accommodation and making full use of the stock complements the identification of new residential sites to provide a stable community base on which to build and boost confidence in an area. However, housing is not always more valuable in the public interest than other uses. There is a role for non residential uses such as small workshops, social care and community facilities which support the local community and reduce the need to travel or there may be another overriding need. It may be the case that there is no realistic alternative if, for example, the residential

environment is considered to be unacceptably poor and unlikely to be improved in the foreseeable future or if the proposed use will serve the retention and proper maintenance of a building or buildings that would otherwise be lost. The impact of any alternative use on the local residential area will be taken into account.

**H4: PROPOSALS INVOLVING A NET LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE IT WOULD HARM HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES UNLESS:**

- (a) **THE PROPOSED USE WILL MEET A NEED FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES; OR**
- (b) **THERE IS AN OVERRIDING NEED FOR THE ALTERNATIVE USE; OR**
- (c) **THERE IS NO REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE; AND**
- (d) **THE PROPOSED USE WILL NOT HARM THE LOCAL RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT AND WILL NOT PREJUDICE FUTURE RESIDENTIAL USE OF THE AREA.**

### **Diversity of Housing**

#### Conversion/ Special Needs/ Student Housing

4.34 The alteration of houses to flats and self-contained bedsitters can make a valuable contribution to housing stock provided that public health standards are maintained, including the provision of amenities, means of escape in case of fire and intensity of occupation. Any mismatch between household size and dwelling size can be relieved by the conversion of property. In contrast to new build the market is able to rapidly respond to demand by converting existing stock. If the property is already in multiple occupation the standard of accommodation is likely to be improved by conversion and parking problems may be reduced but it will result in the loss of low cost accommodation.

4.35 With increasing emphasis on the provision of owner occupation and the subsequent decline in the private and public sectors, many people on low incomes have turned to cheaper shared accommodation, often referred to as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). However, many HMOs are unauthorised, having been established without the necessary planning consent. This has led to concern about standards of accommodation and their impact on adjoining residential properties and the character of an area. Problems include inappropriate location, overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, fire hazard and poor management leading to noise and disturbance.

4.36 Although there is potential for an increase in the supply of private rented accommodation as a result of the introduction of Government incentives to landlords to let property, rents are still likely to be a constraint. For many, HMOs will remain the only source of affordable housing. To safeguard the residential environment, the clustering of such premises should be avoided. It may be appropriate to take

## Housing

enforcement action against unauthorised HMOs where the use materially affects the amenity of the occupants of the building or adjacent buildings or the character of the area. However, where the use is well established and causes little detriment to the residential environment, the retention of the use may be permitted, subject to meeting environmental health standards.

4.37 The need for housing to meet the requirements of people with a wide range of special needs is also increasing. The Council's Housing Strategy aims to provide new permanent housing, in close association with the Health Authority, Social Services, the voluntary sector and housing associations. The accommodation should be designed to the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances, depending, for example, on whether the development involves a new building or alterations to an existing one. Car ownership amongst people with special needs is low so development should be located close to local shops and services, community facilities and bus routes. Residential areas next to shopping centres, which include a post office, chemist and doctors surgery, are suitable locations but, to maintain a balanced community and avoid social problems, special needs housing should not be concentrated in any one area.

4.38 Similarly the development of purpose built student accommodation beyond the University campus can give rise to loss of amenity if the development is not controlled. Priority should be given to locations which are close to the University or where the University is easily accessible by modes of transport other than the car i.e. along bus routes which serve the University or along cycle routes. Car parking provision should be limited.

4.39 Accordingly, the Council intends to actively promote greater diversity of housing provision but will take into account the impact of proposals on the residential environment and the character of the street and the effect on amenity space, parking and traffic safety.

**H5: THE CONVERSION OF DWELLINGS TO FLATS, SELF-CONTAINED BEDSITTERS OR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS OR STUDENT HOUSING WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:**

- (a) **THE SCALE AND INTENSITY OF USE WILL NOT HARM THE CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING AND LOCALITY AND WILL NOT CAUSE AN UNACCEPTABLE REDUCTION IN THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING OCCUPIERS OR RESULT IN ON-STREET PARKING PROBLEMS;**
- (b) **THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT CREATE AN OVER CONCENTRATION OF THE USE IN ANY ONE AREA OF THE CITY WHICH WOULD CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OR CREATE AN IMBALANCE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY;**
- (c) **SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING IS LOCATED CLOSE TO LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND BUS ROUTES;**

- (d) **STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IS LOCATED SO AS TO LIMIT THE NEED TO TRAVEL TO THE CAMPUS BY CAR.**

### **Affordable Housing**

4.40 Government advice on the provision of affordable housing through the planning process is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – Housing (paras 12-20), and in Circular 6/98: ‘Planning and Affordable Housing’. This guidance states that a community’s need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration which may properly be taken into account in formulating development plan policies and determining planning applications and that where there is evidence of need for affordable housing, local plans should include a policy for seeking an element of affordable housing on suitable sites. The Government advise that any local plan policy should be based upon a good understanding of the needs of the area during the period of the development plan.

4.41 To assess the level of need, the City Council commissioned Fordham Research to carry out a comprehensive Housing Needs Survey. The survey, which took place in Spring/Summer 2000, found that, in the period until 2005, approximately 3900 additional affordable homes might be required. This estimate takes into account other means of resolving housing need such as relets and facilitating transfers within the Council and RSL housing stock and through the provision of adaptations, repairs and improvements. The number of new affordable homes identified in the survey exceeds the total supply of all housing to be developed in the period until 2011.

4.42 An update of the survey, carried out in 2003, indicates a shortfall of just under 4,400 affordable homes up to 2008.

4.43 The Joint Housing Register, which is maintained by the Council and its partner Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) shows that there is a priority need for family homes. Although they do not form the majority of the people in need, households with or expecting children make up around 30% of the Register – these households tend to experience the worst housing conditions because they are more likely to be living in overcrowded conditions and sharing accommodation with other households. At the same time the supply of existing affordable rented accommodation is diminishing through the ‘Right to Buy’ Council homes and the ‘Right to Acquire’ Housing Association properties.

4.44 Affordable housing is defined as “both low cost market and subsidised housing that will be available to people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on open market”. This includes the provision of low cost as well as rented and shared ownership accommodation. The City Council especially encourage the provision of rented accommodation because the Housing Needs Survey suggests that few households in housing need in the City are able to afford low cost market housing. The Council will use the Housing Corporation rent caps and target rents, with increases limited annually in perpetuity by reference to the Retail Prices

## Housing

Index, as a measure against which to assess affordability whichever tenure is secured. The Council will also use, as a measure, the reasonable maximum expected housing costs of people on low incomes and/or on housing and/or other welfare benefits or in low paid employment and not entitled to housing or other welfare benefits.

4.45 The City Council will, therefore, seek, through negotiations with landowners and developers, to ensure that a proportion of new dwellings on suitable sites within the plan period are made available to households in housing need. A realistic target is set which will help ease the problem but, in view of the level of need outlined above, it is recognised that achieving the target will by no means resolve the problem. The amount, type and mix of affordable housing and the mix of housing tenures will be a matter for negotiation but the Council will aim for 25% of the total dwelling provision on suitably qualifying sites, depending upon site conditions and other planning objectives. This level of provision (25% of the local plan allocations would provide over 500 houses in the period up to 2011) represents a reasonable and effective contribution.

4.46 The depth and breadth of need also justifies applying the policy to the lower site thresholds identified in Circular 6/98, i.e. to proposals on sites which are capable of yielding 15 dwellings or more or which have a site area of 0.5 ha or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings. The threshold is expressed in terms of the capability of the site, in order to overcome attempts to evade site thresholds, either by lowering densities, by phasing development, by submitting subsequent applications on the same site, or by the incremental acquisition of sites.

4.47 To ensure that the affordable housing, which is provided, continues to meet housing need in the City, it should wherever possible remain available for successive as well as initial occupiers. Circular 6/98 advocates that this can be best done through the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord. In addition, a condition or legal agreement will normally be attached to a planning permission to ensure that the housing does accommodate existing and incoming members of the local community in housing need. This is defined as:

- (i) people on the waiting list or transfer list of the Council or any registered social landlord; or
- (ii) people who qualify to move to Exeter to take part in a mobility scheme operated by the Council; or
- (iii) people who are homeless and who are considered to be in priority need of permanent housing; or
- (iv) people who live or work or who have written confirmation of work in the City and who are considered to be suitable to occupy affordable housing; and, in every case,
- (v) people on low incomes and/or on housing and/or other welfare benefits or in low paid employment and not entitled to housing or other welfare benefits.

4.48 Government advice states that there is a presumption that affordable housing should form part of the development of sites which are suitable for such accommodation. However, there may be circumstances where developers do not wish to include an element of affordable housing on a suitable site but are prepared to make alternative provision. In exceptional cases it may be acceptable for a financial or other contribution to be made towards the provision of affordable housing on a site elsewhere in the City.

4.49 PPG3 emphasises the need to create mixed and inclusive communities and urges local authorities to encourage a better social mix by avoiding the creation of large areas of housing of similar characteristics. To further these aims the City Council will negotiate with developers to secure a better mix of house types and tenures. In order to ensure the development of mixed tenure areas the Council will seek to negotiate planning obligations to make sure that the supply of affordable housing is provided concurrently with general market housing.

4.50 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to guide landowners, developers and other interested parties on the provision of affordable housing through the planning process in Exeter.

**H6: HOUSING PROPOSALS ON SITES CAPABLE OF YIELDING 15 OR MORE DWELLINGS OR ON SITES OF 0.5 HA OR MORE (IRRESPECTIVE OF THE NUMBER OF DWELLINGS PROPOSED) SHOULD INCLUDE PROVISION FOR SUBSIDISED RENTED, SHARED OWNERSHIP OR LOW COST MARKET HOUSING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CITY WIDE TARGET FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

**THE COUNCIL WILL IMPOSE PLANNING CONDITIONS OR SEEK TO NEGOTIATE PLANNING OBLIGATIONS TO ENSURE THAT THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS OCCUPIED:**

- **INITIALLY, AND**
- **IN PERPETUITY INsofar AS ‘RIGHT TO BUY’ AND OTHER LEGAL REQUIREMENTS PERMIT,**

**BY MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO OCCUPY HOUSING GENERALLY AVAILABLE ON THE OPEN MARKET.**

**IN ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF A SITE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING THE FOLLOWING MATTERS WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION:**

- **LOCAL HOUSING NEED;**
- **SITE CONDITIONS; AND**
- **OTHER PLANNING OBJECTIVES**

### Housing for Disabled People

4.51 The City Council wishes to ensure that new housing will, as far as is reasonable, contribute to the needs of disabled people and enable them to live as independently as possible in the community. If an increasing proportion of the general housing stock is designed to a standard which makes this possible, it will allow people with disabilities more choice of housing and will make it increasingly unnecessary for people to move if they become less mobile.

4.52 The Housing Needs Survey, carried out for the City Council by Fordham Research (see 4.41 and 4.42), suggests that approximately 5,500 households in the City have at least one person with special needs. The main category of special needs are people with a physical disability and frail elderly households. A joint assessment system set up by the City Council Housing Services and Social Services indicates that there is a pressing need to resolve the housing difficulties of around 150 households, many of whom require wheelchair standard accommodation.

4.53 Changes to Part M of the Building Regulations, which deals with access and facilities for people with disabilities, mean that all new housing should now be built to a certain basic standard. Under the altered regulations new homes must be accessible by people who are disabled and by others, such as parents with children in pushchairs. The amendments now cover safe and convenient access across the threshold as well as the approach to the front door, to ensure that there is a space of a double buggy, wheelchair, stick or crutch user to get past a parked car and into the home.

4.54 The Building Regulations do not, however, require housing to be designed with the potential to be occupied by the 5% of people with severe disabilities and permanently confined to wheelchairs. Such housing generally needs to be on one level and, in addition to easy access, have above average space standards in order to allow for full wheelchair manoeuvre throughout. This means it will be desirable for any occupier, not solely people confined to wheelchairs. The principal features required at the construction stage in order to implement adaptation to full wheelchair standards at a later date are:

- (i) a level or slightly ramped approach and flush threshold at the main entrance;
- (ii) internal planning for wheelchair manoeuvre in all principal rooms;
- (iii) a downstairs bedroom and bathroom or, in a two storey house, a downstairs WC and a straight flight staircase suitable for the installation of a stair or chair lift;
- (iv) bathrooms and toilets large enough to permit lateral transfers from wheelchair to WC/bath and forward transfer from wheelchair to WC.

4.55 As there is an additional cost in providing the more generous than average standards required, it is appropriate that efforts to provide housing for people with disabilities should concentrate on larger schemes. To accord with Policy H6 on

affordable housing, this is set at 15 dwellings or more or which have a site area of 0.5 ha or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings. Since 1995 an average of 15 wheelchair homes have either been provided through new development or through adaptations to existing housing stock. To maintain this the Council will aim for 5% of the total dwelling provision on suitably qualifying sites, depending on the site conditions and other planning objectives.

**H7: HOUSING PROPOSALS ON SITES CAPABLE OF YIELDING 15 OR MORE DWELLINGS OR ON SITES OF 0.5 HA OR MORE (IRRESPECTIVE OF THE NUMBER OF DWELLINGS PROPOSED), AND DEVELOPMENTS OF 20 OR MORE HOUSING UNITS WHICH ARE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR SHOPS AND SERVICES, SHOULD PROVIDE AN ELEMENT OF HOUSING THAT CAN EASILY BE ADAPTED FOR OCCUPATION BY PEOPLE PERMANENTLY CONFINED TO WHEELCHAIRS. THE SCALE AND TYPE OF PROVISION SOUGHT WILL BE NEGOTIATED TAKING INTO ACCOUNT LOCAL NEED FOR SUCH HOUSING AND SITE CONDITIONS.**

