

## 6.0 TOURISM

### Objectives

- to adopt a sustainable approach to tourism in the City;
- to establish Exeter as a year round leisure and business tourism destination

6.1 Tourism benefits the city by the provision of jobs and the support of services which the local population alone could not sustain. A 2000 study estimated that the City receives 250,000 staying trips, 993,000 visitor nights and nearly 2 million non-local day visitors. Tourism in 2000 contributed £86.7 million into the City's economy and supported over 2,800 jobs in the City, around 5% of the City's working population.

6.2 The growth in the short break market, increased popularity of special interest holidays, particularly those that focus on heritage, culture and shopping, and the trend towards higher quality coaching holidays, all point towards considerable potential for tourist growth in the City. Added to this, the meetings and conference market offers Exeter the opportunity to benefit from increased business tourism with a move towards the smaller conferences, to which the City's venues are well suited and have the capacity to exploit.

6.3 However, tourism development can increase traffic and reduce the quality of the townscape and environment. These problems can actually reduce the attractiveness of the City to tourists and thus damage the industry itself as well as causing direct economic and social disbenefits to the local community, hence the need for tourism management. The City Council approach to tourism management is set out in its Tourism Development Strategy which takes into consideration the strategies of South West Tourism, the English Tourism Council and the British Tourist Authority.

### Strategic Guidance

6.4 The Government (Planning Policy Guidance Note 21: Tourism) considers that tourism can act as a positive force for environmental protection and enhancement and provide opportunities for urban regeneration. The central objective is to achieve sustainable development that serves the interests of both economic growth and conservation of the environment. This is reflected in Regional Guidance which directs new facilities towards those areas that can most effectively manage the increased tourism pressures. It is also reflected in the Structure Plan which seeks to maintain and focus tourism development on the county's main centres, including Exeter, with the aim of promoting sustainable tourism.

### Local Plan Objectives

6.5 The core features of sustainable tourism development are supporting the local economy, the re-use of previously-developed land, the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage resources and the promotion of alternatives to the private motor

## Tourism

car. The development of year round facilities aims to maximise the efficient use of tourism infrastructure including transport systems and accommodation. Exeter City Centre and adjacent areas, including the Quayside, encompass most of the City's tourist infrastructure of facilities and attractions and contain brownfield sites that would benefit from tourist development. They also include most of the City's cultural and heritage resources that could equally contribute to and benefit from tourism and are both nationally and locally accessible by rail, coach and bus services. Consequently these are the preferred areas for tourism development.

**6.6** Topsham is also a rich cultural resource attractive to tourists. Here the focus will be on maintaining the quality of existing tourist and visitor attractions, with emphasis on the built and natural character of the area, rather than major new tourist development.

**6.7** The management of the City's shopping, transport, leisure, landscape and historic townscape resources are all important aspects of Exeter's tourism product. Of particular significance are the retail proposals for the Princesshay/ Bedford Street area (see Key Proposal 2); the commercial leisure proposals for the Bus & Coach Station (see Key Proposal 3); improving accessibility, particularly through park and ride (see Section 9: Transport); protection of the City's heritage (see Section 10: Conservation) and of the environment (see Section 11: Landscape and Section 12: Environment); and the emphasis on good, innovative design (see Section 13: Design Guidance).

**6.8** To maximise the benefit from tourism to the City the provision of first class visitor information and services is crucial. The Council intend to develop a comprehensive and effective network of pedestrian signing to guide tourists in the City Centre; between the City Centre and the Quay; and from St David's rail station and Central rail station, the Bus and Coach Station and the car parks. The interpretation board network will be expanded, tourist information provided in car parks and, most importantly, a Heritage Centre and a multi-use Tourist Information Centre and Booking Centre established in the Princesshay scheme.

### **Tourist Accommodation**

**6.9** Hotels in the City Centre and adjacent areas are accessible to tourists by public transport, being close to the national public transport nodes of St. David's and Central rail stations and the Bus & Coach Station. A large hotel close to these facilities is likely to generate less traffic than developments remote from the City Centre for which the only realistic mode of access will be by car. Tourists staying in the City Centre are more likely to use local services and facilities, maximising the benefits of increased tourist spending to the economy.

**6.10** The central area of Exeter contains a number of sites allocated for office development and includes some office buildings that are not suited to modern office operations due to their size, layout and facilities. Provided that the supply of office accommodation to meet investment opportunities is maintained, the development of office land or conversion of office buildings may provide the best locations for hotel provision. The impact on the availability of offices to meet demand will be subject to regular monitoring. Hotel development on employment land outside the City Centre

will be assessed against Policy E3 to determine whether any harm is likely to be caused to business or employment opportunities by the loss of employment land.

**TM1: HOTEL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED IN THE CITY CENTRE ON LAND ALLOCATED FOR OFFICES OR THROUGH THE CONVERSION OF AN OFFICE BUILDING, AND AT THE QUAYSIDE, PROVIDED THAT:**

- (a) THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT HARM THE AMENITIES OF NEARBY RESIDENTS BY VIRTUE OF NOISE, SMELL, LATE NIGHT ACTIVITY OR PARKING;
- (b) ADEQUATE FACILITIES FOR ACCESS BY BUS OR COACH ARE PROVIDED;
- (c) APPROPRIATE SITES REMAIN AVAILABLE TO MEET OFFICE DEMAND.

6.11 Small hotels and self-catering establishments, e.g. conversions with less than 25 rooms, make an important contribution to the local economy. Unlike larger establishments small hotels do not generate large amounts of traffic and may be permissible throughout the City provided that the impact on the amenity of nearby residents is controlled. The potential disturbance from the use of facilities such as bars, restaurants, conference rooms and leisure facilities by non- staying guests could damage that amenity as could excessive traffic or pressure on shared neighbourhood parking.

**TM2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL HOTELS AND GUEST HOUSES AND SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION WILL BE PERMITTED IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS WHERE:**

- (a) THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT HARM LOCAL AMENITY BY VIRTUE OF NOISE, SMELL, LATE NIGHT ACTIVITY OR PARKING;
- (b) FACILITIES ARE RESTRICTED TO USE BY STAYING GUESTS UNLESS AMENITY CAN BE SHOWN TO BE MAINTAINED.

### **Tourism Action Areas**

6.12 The Tourism Development Strategy stresses that Exeter’s tourist image is based on its heritage, vibrancy and quality of life. New attractions should respect and enhance these qualities.

6.13 Three Tourism Action Areas have been identified where such development is desirable. These are:

- (i) The Cathedral precinct;
- (ii) The Castle & Museum precinct;

## Tourism

- (iii) The Quay/Canal Basin Area (see Key Proposal 6).

6.14 Within these areas the provision of visitor centres, cafes, restaurants, specialist shops, craft outlets, artists studios and galleries, public space for performance and leisure activities, may be promoted. As they are all within conservation areas a high quality of design is essential. They will be supported by measures to enhance the environment and, where feasible, the removal of traffic together with the provision of accurate and attractive signing and interpretation.

### TM3: WITHIN THE TOURISM ACTION AREAS:

- (a) PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS PROVIDED THEY ARE OF DISTINCTIVE DESIGN WHICH CONSERVES AND BUILDS ON THE HERITAGE OR CHARACTER OF THE AREAS;
- (b) PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR CHANGE OF USE OF A TOURIST ATTRACTION TO OTHER USES UNLESS THE PROPOSED USE WILL MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE THE TOURISM ROLE OF THE AREA OR UNLESS TOURISM USE IS NOT VIABLE
- (c) MEASURES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED TO ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT, INTRODUCE AND EXTEND PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY AND EXPAND THE SIGNING AND INTERPRETATION BOARD NETWORK.

### The Cathedral Precinct

6.15 The Cathedral precinct is Exeter's premier heritage tourism area, encompassing some of the City's best heritage attractions, having a high quality public environment and being well related to the City's retail centre. The area attracts many visitors with potential for further tourist growth. The preservation and enhancement of the Cathedral precinct is an important objective for the City Centre both in tourism and tourism terms.

6.16 A series of covered cloisters once adjoined the Cathedral buildings to the south of the nave. The Cathedral authorities propose to rebuild the cloisters and extend some of the adjoining buildings, providing enhanced entrance, shop and public library. The new facilities would remove clutter from the Cathedral and improve visitor circulation, providing a significant enhancement to this major attraction.

6.17 The ruins of a Roman Bath House, to the west of the Cathedral in Cathedral Green, were excavated in 1971-4 and were preserved by burial in sand. The ruins themselves have potential for interpretation as a major visitor attraction due both to their international importance as the most extensive remains of a legionary bath-house in Europe and to their location next to Exeter's biggest current attraction. Attempts to develop this resource in the past have been delayed by changing market conditions and conflicting schemes but the potential benefits to the Cathedral precinct and the

City as a whole remain significant. The Council will support this initiative once the cloisters project has reached fruition.

6.18 Enhancements to the western end of Cathedral Yard are also proposed. This will create a high quality pedestrian dominated space which provides a vista to the west door of the Cathedral. The enhancements will include the creation of a new carriageway from South Street and associated repaving, removal of parking, closure of Broadgate, creation of an expanded pavement café and revised arrangements for restricted access to the area.

#### The Castle and Museum Precinct

6.19 The Castle and Museum precinct encompasses a large share of Exeter's cultural assets as well as strong heritage connections through the museums and City fortifications present. Being close to the City Centre, the site has significant potential for enhanced provision of cultural and heritage tourism.

6.20 The relocation of the Crown Courts from Rougemont Castle offers a major opportunity to enhance the attraction of the City to tourists by securing a tourist/cultural use of the Castle and providing public access. A tourist related use that establishes public access to the Castle area will be sought. This might best be achieved through refurbishment and mixed-use of cultural/entertainment and heritage interpretation facilities, possibly including shops, cafes and restaurants, that establishes the castle courtyard as a public square. High level public access to the fortifications and pedestrian links to the surrounding parks would further improve the appeal of the site. Some ancillary tourist accommodation might also be appropriate. Most of the site is protected as a Scheduled Monument and Grade II\* listed building; subject to Policies C2 and C5. Proposed works will need detailed evaluation to ensure that archaeological issues are fully addressed.

**TM4: ROUGEMONT CASTLE IS PROPOSED FOR A TOURIST AND CULTURAL USE THAT CONSERVES AND BUILDS ON THE HERITAGE OF THE CASTLE AND PROVIDES PUBLIC ACCESS. PROPOSALS MAY INCLUDE CULTURAL/ENTERTAINMENT AND HERITAGE INTERPRETATION FACILITIES, INCLUDING SHOPS, CAFÉS AND RESTAURANTS.**

#### The Quay/Canal Basin Area

6.21 Guidance on the overall development of the Quay/Canal Basin area is set out in paras. 14.20 – 14.30 and Key Proposal 6.

#### City Wall

6.22 The City Wall, originally built by the Romans in 200AD and maintained as a defensive structure for well over a millennium, is an important part of the City's heritage which, along with the Cathedral, underpins Exeter's status as an historic City. Throughout its history the wall has been part of the living fabric of the City, with buildings being built against and over it, adding to its history for future

generations. Though the setting of some sections of the wall have been improved by the design of adjacent development and the provision of public access, the wall's tourism potential is not fully realised.

**6.23** Most of the wall is protected as a Scheduled Monument and is in City Council ownership. The Council recognises that the proper maintenance and enhancement of the City wall is essential to the full realisation of its economic and visitor potential. It will therefore continue to maintain the wall and will encourage those responsible for privately-owned sections to do likewise. It is a long term aim of the Council to, where feasible, provide a walkway along the circuit of the remaining wall to further establish it as a tourist feature. Elevated sections of walkway along the surviving ramparts or parapet walk would provide outstanding views across the City. Increased interpretation of the history of the wall and related features would further enhance its tourist value. An extended walkway could also improve access to the Quay and to the largely underused historic assets of the West Quarter, including St. Edmunds Church & Bridge, St. Mary Steps Church, The House That Moved and the Catacombs. It would also serve to support the tourist function of the Castle & Museum precinct.

**TM5: DEVELOPMENTS ON SITES ADJACENT TO THE CITY WALL WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THE PROPOSALS:**

- (a) **PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE SETTING OF THE CITY WALL THROUGH HIGH QUALITY DESIGN;**
- (b) **WHERE FEASIBLE PROVIDE PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE CIRCUIT OF THE CITY WALL;**
- (c) **PROVIDE RELEVANT INTERPRETATION OF THE CITY WALL, TOGETHER WITH SIGNING AND LIGHTING WHERE APPROPRIATE.**