

Newcourt Masterplan

November 2010



Exeter City Council

Exeter Local Development Framework

Background

The Exeter Core Strategy Proposed Submission sets out the vision, objectives and strategy for the development of Exeter up to 2026. The Core Strategy makes provision for 12,000 new dwellings, 60 hectares of employment land and 40,000 square metres of retail floorspace during this period. Newcourt plays a fundamental strategic role in this potential growth and is identified as a strategic allocation in the Core Strategy.

Given the extent and importance of this strategic allocation it is considered that a Masterplan is needed to provide guidance for developers as to how this area can be developed in a comprehensive and co-ordinated way to deliver a high quality sustainable form of development.

A Masterplanning study was commissioned from Atkins Design Solutions which concluded by presenting two Masterplan options. This study was however supplemented by further work and information on Green Infrastructure, Transport and Education requirements. Exeter City Council therefore took the opportunity to review those Masterplan options and take forward a 'preferred option' which was the basis for public consultation. The site investigation and appraisal, and the development of the concept for the Newcourt area in the Atkins study continue to be important background to the development of the Masterplan.

A key part of the public consultation was to seek views on the potential for a Gypsy and Traveller site to be delivered within the Masterplan area. Following public consultation the Masterplan has been revised and a Gypsy and Traveller site shown. The Masterplan has been approved for development management purposes and it is intended that the Masterplan be adopted by the City Council as a Supplementary Planning Document in due course.

Aims

The Masterplan for Newcourt is intended to accommodate a total of around 16 hectares of employment land and 3500 dwellings. It is intended that uses are arranged to achieve the following aims:

- *high quality sustainable development*
- *sustainable transport*
- *environmental protection*
- *creation of a mixed and balanced community*
- *residential amenity*
- *protection of the historic environment*

Employment land

The Exeter Local Plan 1st Review included a 12.4 ha employment allocation (Science Park) on the south side of the A379. The Masterplan identifies 16 hectares of employment land which contributes to meeting Exeter's employment land requirements up to 2026.

The employment area is increased to 16 hectares by including land that was not designated for development in the Exeter Local Plan 1st Review. The 16 hectares have been divided with two areas each of around 8 hectares (labelled y and z on the

Masterplan figure) to create a better distribution of uses within the Masterplan area and create sites that may be attractive to a single occupier.

These employment areas are positioned to be visible and accessible and, whilst the importance of good road access is recognised and achieved from the A379, good opportunities are also provided to access these areas by means other than the private car and to encourage combined trips.

Proposals for small scale employment and live work units may be acceptable within residential areas and such proposals will be considered on their merits.

Housing land

In order to develop a robust Masterplan which addresses the primary requirements of this development, the provision and density of residential dwellings needs to be appropriate to the scheme and the context.

Part of the Exeter Local Plan First Review employment allocation to the east of St. Bridget's Nurseries has been replaced by a residential designation (are g on the Masterplan figure) in order to meet the housing number requirements and achieve a mixture of uses through the development site.

Taking into account the developable area assumptions set out in Exeter City Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment of 80% for sites of 1 hectare and over and 100% for sites under 1 hectare, the study area provides approximately 56 hectares of new residential land with the potential to accommodate 2300 new dwellings. If current planning permissions and resolutions to grant consent are included, the study area has the potential of providing 3500 dwellings.

Re-routing or undergrounding of electricity lines that cross the site could increase the developable land area and improve the amenity of the area. Developers are encouraged to explore the opportunity to reroute lines away from existing and proposed residential areas and public open spaces.

Gypsy and Travellers site.

The City Council has participated in a County wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). Recent advice from central government is that following abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies Local Councils will be best placed to assess the needs of travellers and that the GTAA is a good starting point for determining requirements. The Devon wide GTAA concluded that there is a need to provide 12 residential pitches in Exeter up to 2011. A further 13 residential pitches may also be needed by 2026 in view of national estimates of likely growth in the number of gypsy households. Following the examination in public the RSS panel recommended that 5 transit pitches will also be needed in the City.

The strategic allocation at Newcourt provides the opportunity to deliver a residential site in a position that takes into account the needs of gypsies and travellers and the interests of local residents and other occupiers of land. The requirement for a self contained site providing up to 13 pitches with dedicated access from the highway network was therefore included in the Core Strategy Submission Draft.

This is a residential use and as such would necessarily be provided on land considered suitable for residential use that is accessible to local facilities including schools and health centres.

A location west of St. Bridgets Nurseries, within development area y, has been identified in the Masterplan. The site could be managed by the local authority or by a Registered Social Landlord such as a Housing Association.

Newcourt House

Newcourt House has the potential to act as the focal point of the scheme enhancing the distinctive character and identity of the development area. Not only does the grade II listed building provide an attractive focal point, it is also strategically positioned in the centre of the site. The Masterplan proposes that Newcourt House should continue in its current role and that a new public open space is formed in front of the house and arranged so as to enhance the setting of the building and maximise the potential of the building to enhance the attractiveness of this space.

Community facilities.

It is considered that community infrastructure within the Masterplan area, including health facilities, community facilities and local shops should be co-located with existing community and retail commitments on the central spine road but also with proposed education uses. This provides 3 key nodes around facilities can be developed to help give the area a legible structure and bring community facilities within easy reach of residents.

Careful consideration will need to be given to any commercial uses around school sites.

Education.

Provision of two double form entry primary schools will be required as the study area is developed. These schools should be located to provide safe, convenient pedestrian and cycle access to the primary schools from all residential locations in the Masterplan area. It is proposed a new school be located north and south of Old Rydon Lane to achieve easy access from all parts of the Masterplan Area.

Secondary education will be accommodated by the expansion of existing schools for which developer contributions will be sought.

Transport.

Rail use is considered to have the greatest potential to reduce the level of private car use at Newcourt. Land will be safeguarded for a new rail halt on the Exeter to Exmouth line within the Masterplan area. A new rail line crossing will be provided at this point. Pedestrian and cycle connections to the halt through the Masterplan area shall be provided.

The primary highway access to the Newcourt Masterplan area will be the new spine road that links the A379 with Topsham Road. The primary access to the areas east of the railway is from the A379 at Sandy Park, the junction will require upgrading to accommodate right turning vehicle movements. Old Rydon Lane will be managed with the aim of avoiding additional traffic using this route to access the Masterplan area and to ensure that it does not become attractive as a through route for private vehicular traffic. Development will impact on the surrounding highway network and developer contributions will be sought to mitigate these impacts including potentially including improvements to Junction 30 of the M5.

Major trip generating uses such as the schools and employment areas will be expected to operate within Travel Plans to promote sustainable travel.

The new spine road which links the A379 to Topsham Road will provide the primary public transport route through the site and enables an orbital bus route. A package of public transport service and route improvements will be required to ensure the development area is adequately served by public transport.

Cycle links throughout the scheme will follow alignments of proposed primary and secondary routes and existing roads. Old Rydon Lane will be managed to make this route attractive to cyclists. Additional cycle links across the site will be provided both along the alignment of the existing railway line crossing the existing bridge into Digby and connecting the employment sites in the north of the site to Topsham (via Newcourt Lane Bridge) and to Topsham Road in the south. A new pedestrian and cycle link across the railway would form part of the development of the rail halt and transport hub and a new link across the A379 will improve linkage west to Ludwell Valley Park and beyond.

Links through development areas to connect to the strategic routes should be accommodated in the detailed layout.

Land beneath the electricity lines at the southern end of the site near Topsham Road may be required for the provision of a Park and Ride facility serving the Topsham Road corridor.

Green Infrastructure.

A framework of green infrastructure will be provided across the site, connecting the new green spaces with existing green spaces and protecting and enhancing the existing wildlife habitats within the study area.

Key habitat links including those along the line of the rail line, Old Rydon Lane and Sea Brook as shown on the Masterplan figure shall be provided on site and maintained as such.

New green spaces created within the area will include opportunities for informal leisure, formal sports and recreation, children's play spaces and allotments in accordance with local planning policies.

Drainage

Surface water drainage should be achieved through comprehensive SUDS systems and the Green Infrastructure framework. Impermeable areas should be kept to a minimum, green roofs and rainwater harvesting/recycling should be employed to reduce run-off.

A minimum ten metre wide easement shall be provided either side of the Sea Brook.

Archaeology

A number of archaeological sites, mainly prehistoric in date, are known from existing records to be present within the Newcourt area, and recent studies and surveys have identified others. Although none of these sites are currently protected as scheduled monuments, consideration of the impact of development upon them is a material planning matter, and some of the more significant ones may therefore have a bearing on the detailed design of a development, particularly layout.

Prospective developers should therefore identify and assess the relative significance of any potential sites and historic land boundaries early on in the design process, before detailed layouts are finalised, and submit this as supporting information with planning applications. This may involve arranging survey work and, where necessary, limited site investigation. Where it is subsequently agreed that the less significant or well preserved sites and remains can be destroyed by development, appropriate archaeological excavation and recording will be ensured via a planning condition. Further guidance is available from the city council's Archaeology Officer regarding the scope of supporting information and work required for a particular development area or proposal

Low/Zero Carbon Infrastructure

At least 10% of the energy needs of the development should be provided through decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy production methods.

The potential to achieve exemplary sustainable development, for example by setting up Energy Services Companies (ESCo) or Community Energy Networks to serve the area, or parts of it, should be fully explored.

Residential densities.

In order to allow for the variations in the type, scale and density of proposals that are likely to be put forward by developers, an average density of 50 dwellings per hectare (dph) for the Masterplan is assumed in all areas except area 'g' adjacent the A379 where 60 dph is considered an appropriate target. In reality, based on the average densities of schemes already permitted within Newcourt, proposals across the Study area are likely to vary from between 45 to 55 dwellings per hectare and therefore an average of 50 dph has generally been applied.

Densities of around 50 dwellings per hectare will ensure best use is made of available development land and will help ensure the viability of local services and public transport.

Development Areas.

The accompanying Masterplan figure identifies a series of development areas which are referenced in the figure and detailed below.

Residential

Area a:	
Dev. Area :	11.8 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	472
Area b:	
Dev. Area:	8.6 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	343
Area c:	
Dev. Area: (excluding 1.9 ha for school)	5.1 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	204
Area d:	
Dev. Area:	4.2 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	168
Area e:	
Dev. Area:	5.8 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	231
Area f:	
Dev. Area:	10.2 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 50 dph & 80% developable	406
Area g:	
Dev. Area: (excluding 1.9 ha for school)	10.5 Ha
Potential Dwellings @ 60 dph & 80% developable	504
Total Residential Area	56.1 Ha
Total Potential Dwellings	2329
Existing Commitments (dwellings):	1176
Total Potential Yield:	3505

Employment

Area y (excluding 0.5 ha for G&T site)	7.4 Ha
Area z	8.3 Ha
Total Employment Area	15.7 Ha

Phasing

Notwithstanding potential ownership and delivery a realistic and logical pattern that reflects infrastructure delivery requirements and owner aspirations is set out below.

Phase 1. A series of residential planning permissions in the centre of the site have been granted and are identified on the Masterplan figure. These residential developments with associated infrastructure are considered to constitute a first phase of development. This phase includes the spine road which provides primary access to the Newcourt Area. Current permissions total 1176 dwellings.

Phase 2. The second phase is development south of Old Rydon Lane and west of the Railway including associated infrastructure which includes a new primary school during the early part of phase 2. This would include around 940 dwellings.

Phase 3. Development north of Old Rydon Lane and east of the railway line would form a later delivery phase. This would total around 1382 dwellings and include the second new primary school.

Masterplan Figure



Background Documents:

Exeter Core Strategy Proposed Submission July 2010.
Transportation Access Strategy Addendum Report January 2010, Devon County Council
Education Statement September 2009, Devon County Council
Newcourt Masterplanning Study, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council
Transportation Technical Report, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council
Strategic Air Quality Assessment, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council
Water Quality Impact Assessment, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council
Implementation Plan, Atkins on behalf of Exeter City Council
The Devon-wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment, University of Plymouth
Green Infrastructure Strategy, Exeter and East Devon Growth Point