

Media releases

City's Planning Blueprint Approved By Inspector

25/11/2011

Exeter's development blueprint, which will guide planning decisions until 2026, has been approved by an independent planning inspector.

The City Council's Core Strategy which sets out the development of Exeter for the next 15 years is considered to be a "sound basis for the future planning of the city".

The inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, held public hearings in June and August of this year to hear views on the Core Strategy. The Council has now received the report setting out the inspector's findings.

Providing up to 60 hectares of additional employment land in the City and over 12,000 additional new homes to accompany this growth in employment up to 2026 are among the major proposals in the plan. The majority of the additional housing is due to take place on the eastern side of Exeter at Monkerton/Hill Barton and Newcourt. Another 500 new dwellings are also proposed to the south of Alphington.

The strategy set out an affordable housing target of 35%, subject to viability of the development. It has a series of policies to ensure that new developments are as sustainable as possible and minimise the effects of climate change. The strategy also seeks to ensure that the growth of Exeter is not at the expense of the high-quality environment and open spaces that make the city such an attractive place to live and work.

One of the most hotly contested topics at the hearings was the location and need for the proposed Gypsy and Traveller sites at Monkerton and Newcourt. The view was widely expressed at the hearings that the search for Gypsy and Traveller sites should be the subject of a further exercise involving additional public consultation and scrutiny to select the most appropriate sites.

One of three changes the inspector has made to the strategy concerns the Gypsy and Traveller site search. The inspector has deleted the reference to the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches in the policy relating to Monkerton and

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Newcourt instead referring to providing sites if necessary. It is suggested that the search for such sites should adopt a more collaborative approach and consider a wider range of locations.

Cllr Pete Edwards, Leader of the Council, said: "The issue of Gypsy and Traveller sites has caused considerable controversy. I will ask the Council to accept the Inspector's recommendation that there should be further consultation. I intend to propose that the Council prepares a new single issue Gypsy and Traveller site allocation plan. This will be a statutory document with full public consultation. A programme for the preparation of the document will be prepared in due course.

"The existing two preferred sites that are presently identified for Gypsy and Traveller pitches in the Monkerton/Hill Barton and Newcourt master plans will no longer be safeguarded and can be released for other uses."

Other changes that the inspector recommended concern the need to review the Core Strategy should housing land not come forward quickly enough and the removal of a specific employment allocation at Ibstock Brickworks in Pinhoe, which the inspector thought was too specific a location for such a strategic level plan.

Cllr Rachel Sutton, Lead Councillor for Sustainable Development and Transport said: "This report is very good news for the city. It reaffirms the Council's belief that the provisions of the Core Strategy represent a sound and practical basis for the planning of Exeter for the next fifteen years. It will form the framework on which to develop more detailed policies. The City Council will now be able to join the 30% of local authorities who have an adopted Core Strategy. This will ensure a carefully planned future for the city rather than an ad hoc response to development proposals."

The Council intends to formally adopt the Core Strategy at its meeting in February. The inspector's report can be seen in the Council's Customer Services Centre and all of the documents relating to the Core Strategy including the inspector's report can be found on the Council's website at

www.exeter.gov.uk/inspectorsreport