

# The Exeter Plan

This is our city • This is our future



Full Draft Plan  
October 2023

## Liveable Exeter principles

- 3.10 Exeter is a growing city and we are ambitious for its future. The Liveable Exeter initiative originally set out sites that could accommodate new homes within a series of high quality, brownfield developments.
- 3.11 We want to increase the population living in the central areas of the city and encourage people who may have left Exeter to return to live in a variety of new homes including apartments. Homes will be built within vibrant, neighbourhoods that are walkable, have cafes, shops, community uses and workplaces.
- 3.12 We are committed to making the best use of previously developed land in the city by optimising density to support the significant increase in new and affordable homes and infrastructure we desperately need. This will often mean developing at densities above those of the surrounding area. A design-led approach to optimising density is advocated which should be based on an evaluation of the site's attributes, its surrounding context and capacity for growth and the most appropriate development form. The highest densities should be located in the most accessible and sustainable locations close to the city centre and public transport.
- 3.13 The spatial strategy requires significant brownfield development on large development sites as identified elsewhere in the Exeter Plan. These larger sites offer the potential for new, exciting forms of sustainable, high quality mixed use development.
- 3.14 We understand the importance of the large brownfield sites in meeting our development needs. In 2019, the City Council published its transformational housing delivery programme under the banner of Liveable Exeter. This set out the City Council's ambitions to help meet our housing needs by developing eight strategic brownfield sites across the city.
- 3.15 Whilst some of these sites form an integral part of the spatial strategy, Liveable Exeter is not just a series of sites but a growth and city-making initiative governed by six principles which have been drawn from Exeter's Vision 2040 and national Garden City principles. In adopting the Liveable Exeter principles we aim to strengthen and reinvigorate existing communities and repurpose and transform other parts of the city, which need to change. Collectively the Liveable Exeter principles will achieve the following:
- Development proposals which make the best use of brownfield land and build at optimal densities. All developments should look to optimise their development footprint; accommodating access, servicing and parking in the most efficient ways possible.
  - New development that contributes positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness.
  - New development that supports thriving high streets and local centres, ensuring that for local trips, walking and cycling become the most convenient option, and for longer trips, public transport becomes viable. People-friendly, human-scaled streets and junctions should be a joy to walk and cycle along and incorporate high quality design, materials, improved air quality and overlooking from surrounding buildings.

- Developments that adopt innovative approaches to mixing land uses, and delivering a high quality public realm. Where possible, different land uses should be mixed together, with residential above businesses and community uses commonplace.
  - High quality buildings which support the health and wellbeing of their occupants, and are responsive to the changing way we live, work and spend our leisure time. Public spaces and private communal areas will be safe, accessible, inviting and well used, without the fear of crime. Individual dwellings should provide sufficient comfort, natural light, privacy and quiet.
- 3.16 The Liveable Exeter principles will apply to the large, brownfield development sites identified in the Exeter Plan and other major sites that may come forward in future. These principles are a vital element in steering development and go hand in hand with the spatial strategy of delivering quality development on brownfield land.
- 3.17 The City Council will work collaboratively with landowners and developers to promote the Liveable Exeter principles. Wider planning policy, masterplans, design codes, supporting evidence and other design tools will support this approach, recognising that the characteristics of future development will be site specific. To demonstrate this approach, the City Council is currently preparing a Development Framework and Design Code for the Water Lane site to specifically steer the quality of this regeneration area in the city.
- 3.18 The Liveable Exeter principles are included in policy S2. They are also expanded upon in a separate evidence document. The policy sets out the requirements for the standard of development that the City Council will expect for all strategic brownfield developments in the city. Developments that fail to achieve the standards set out in these principles will be refused. Following the Outline Draft Consultation, an additional principle relating to the importance of reflecting local culture in new development has been added.

## S2: Liveable Exeter principles (Strategic policy)

The delivery of strategic, brownfield developments will be supported.

Planning applications for the strategic brownfield development sites must be accompanied by a masterplan which includes a vision and planning/design framework to guide the comprehensive development of the wider site area.

All strategic brownfield development proposals must demonstrate how each of the following Liveable Exeter principles and requirements will be achieved.

**Principle 1: Memorable places.** Development will:

- Contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating local distinctiveness and reinforcing its role within the city.
- Respond positively to local topography, open spaces and watercourses and maximise views to Exeter's natural and built landmarks and features.
- Make efficient use of land so Exeter remains compact and walkable.
- Enable sustainable transport for access to the city centre, district and local centres, employment areas, the River Exe and the Valley Parks.



- Contribute to the varied and innovative social, economic and cultural offering in the city.

**Principle 2: Outstanding quality.** Development will:

- Build at optimal density and maximise the development footprint, incorporating the highest densities in the most accessible and sustainable locations.
- Incorporate innovative solutions within buildings, transport provision, energy and other infrastructure to achieve our ambitions for a net zero city by 2030.
- Enhance Exeter's natural, built and historic environment, particularly at gateway and arrival points, main routes into the city, city centre, the Ship Canal and Basin, the River Exe and the Valley Parks.
- Provide innovative and exciting education, research, skills, work and leisure destinations in prominent and accessible locations.
- Ensure neighbourhoods function effectively in the long term by incorporating stewardship measures which provide for the effective management and maintenance of the public realm and communal private spaces.

**Principle 3: Welcoming neighbourhoods.** Development will:

- Provide a variety of high quality, affordable, market and specialist homes catering for local needs.
- Support a wide range of accessible, local jobs and provide the education and skills to support local employment.
- Support thriving high streets, district and local centres, and create new centres where appropriate, delivering local shops, open spaces, community, education and health facilities.
- Provide safe, healthy, accessible and inclusive streets and public spaces which are people-friendly, human in scale, well managed and cared for.
- Phase delivery to ensure important infrastructure and facilities are provided early on.

**Principle 4: Liveable buildings.** Development will:

- Ensure that homes are adaptable to changing demands and lifestyles.
- Include beautiful buildings which complement local character using high quality designs and materials.
- Ensure buildings are energy efficient, adopt a fabric-first approach and apply high performance standards such as Passivhaus and whole-life carbon assessment.
- Provide homes that are predominantly dual-aspect ensuring high levels of natural daylight and ventilation.
- Be laid-out and designed to maximise internal air quality.

**Principle 5: Active streets.** Development will:

- Incorporate active travel and passive surveillance measures at the outset of development design.
- Make direct connections to the active travel network and key destinations.
- Reallocate road space to maximise active travel, public transport, shared mobility and the provision of attractive public spaces through seating and planting.
- Maximise parking and storage for cycling, provide infrastructure to support electric vehicles and bicycles and minimise parking for private cars.

**Principle 6: Spaces for people and wildlife.** Development will:

- Provide and enhance connections to existing green networks and spaces including the Valley Parks and Green Circle.
- Maximise opportunities for landscaping, planting and trees using tools such as the Urban Greening Factor.
- Promote vitality and inclusivity by providing safe and attractive places for play, recreation, food growing and socialising outdoors.
- Ensure that space is created specifically for nature to deliver biodiversity gains within the city.

**Principle 7: Connected Culture.** Development will:

- Use culture to improve development quality to drive investment for strategic growth and sustainability in Exeter.
- Support local economic growth by providing flexible space for creative industries.
- Create resilient, adaptable, networked communities and successful centres that support civic pride and express local identity.
- Support high quality cultural place-making projects in the public realm and community facilities to achieve exemplary social value and environmental quality.
- Safeguard, promote access to, and reflect, cultural heritage in local place-making.
- Harness Exeter's rich heritage, local identities and creative talent through civic participation in culture and by supporting 'mean-while uses' whilst sites are being developed.