



Exeter and East Devon
Growth Point



Neighbourhood Planning & Local Planning Service Redesign & Capacity Building - DCLG

Pilot Programme for Local Authorities

Transport summary paper

Introduction

The Local Authorities in the Exeter Housing Market Area (the HMA) have a strong record of working together and with other partners across administrative boundaries to plan for, promote, and deliver growth in an innovative way. The Local Authorities in what is termed the 'Greater Exeter area' are:

- East Devon District Council;
- Exeter City Council;
- Mid Devon District Council;
- Teignbridge District Council; and
- Devon County Council.

Alongside the involvement of the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point, the joint working of the Local Authorities has resulted in the development of the Cranbrook New Community to the east of Exeter, as well as large scale employment sites, all supported by significant transport, education and energy infrastructure.

This collaborative approach is set to develop further in the context of the devolution agenda which is emerging in the Devon area¹. This will seek to establish a new, more formal joined-up approach to setting long term visions and development strategy across the HMA and travel to work area coupled with innovative mechanisms for development and infrastructure delivery.

¹ Information available at:
<http://heartofswlep.co.uk/about-the-lep/strategies-and-priorities/devolution/>

The Authorities recognise that redefining and redesigning the way in which the Local Authorities work together on local plan making will be a vital part of ensuring that collaborative work continues and evolves. As such, the Local Authorities are coming together to work on a joint strategic plan for the area – the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan - a project to which the Partner Authorities have recently committed. The plan will provide a strategic planning framework following appropriate functional geographies, allowing the Authorities to operate more efficiently. It will also be important in ensuring that the Partners comply with the ‘duty to cooperate’ placed on the local authorities through the Localism Act 2011.

The Neighbourhood Planning & Local Planning Service Redesign & Capacity Building support from DCLG has been a very helpful building-block in evolving the way in which the Authorities work together on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, helping to front-load transport and environmental evidence and develop new working arrangements and support infrastructure for IT and mapping.

Work package

A joint bid to the Neighbourhood Planning & Local Planning Service Redesign & Capacity Building fund was submitted by the Partner Authorities.

Total funding of £60,000 was awarded in February 2016 covering three elements to support accelerated strategic planning. The elements were:

- Transportation study work: £25,000
To develop the transportation evidence base to support joined-up plan-making and help develop a long term transportation strategy to support future growth.
- Environmental study work: £15,000
To develop the environmental evidence base to support strategic plan-making and ensure the development of an appropriate strategy for accommodating future growth and environmental aspirations.
- Redesigning data management: £20,000.
To analyse, consolidate and achieve consistency across existing data sets.

This paper summarises the outputs of the transport element of the work undertaken. The outputs of the environmental study and the redesigning data management elements of the work are considered separately.

Transport study work

One of the key functional linkages between the Partner Authorities is their relationship in terms of transportation. Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge broadly come together to form the Exeter Travel to Work Area. As such, it is appropriate to plan collaboratively for transportation issues in the area.

In this regard, the transportation element of the DCLG funding was used to fund the following studies and evidence:

- ‘Future of Transport: Flexibility and resilience in the context of future uncertainties’:

This study has used the principle of scenario testing to consider the potential resilience of future, notional development scenarios and the transport network in the context of future, strategic uncertainties (cost of travel, location of markets and ICT development) in the period up to 2045. This work has helped to consider future development strategy in a completely new way in terms of the potential impacts of external uncertainties. The work aims to underline how resilient notional development scenarios may be to future uncertainties and change. As the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan progresses, the conclusions of this work will be used to inform strategy and policy decisions about the distribution of development across the area. A report has been produced to document this study. This will be made available in due course. The report will also be complemented in future by further testing of potential development scenarios.

- **Baseline transport evidence reporting:**

A significant evidence base will be required to support the preparation of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan. One of the key evidence themes is transportation. A baseline evidence report has been prepared to document the current multi-modal conditions and trends in terms of the transport network in the Greater Exeter area. This study has resulted in the establishment of a consistent data set reflecting the functional, transport-related geography of the Exeter Travel to Work area. The report will be made available in due course.

- **Greater Exeter transport data collection:**

Given the wide geographic scope of the Greater Exeter area, the transportation evidence requirements are significant (notwithstanding the need to take a proportional approach to data collection). As such, the DCLG funding has also been used to commission specific data collection in relation to travel behaviour from those living at Cranbrook, the new community to the east of Exeter which is currently being developed. The data collected will be used in the establishment of new transport modelling and assessment, particularly in the context of considering the potential travel behaviour associated with the new community.

Lessons learnt

A series of lessons have been learned by the Partner Local Authorities as a result of the transportation work undertaken through the DCLG funding. These lessons are predominantly related to:

- Partnership working; and
- Innovative thinking.

Partnership working

The transportation work was commissioned jointly by Local Authorities, across both tiers of Local Government in the Exeter Housing Market Area, together with the Growth Point. Working together on the development of transport evidence has allowed a series of open discussions to take place between Local Authorities with different responsibilities. This has improved the knowledge and understanding of the priorities of all parties and has allowed issues to be discussed and addressed early in the preparation of evidence to ensure appropriate outcomes are delivered. This has been of particular help in relation to the dynamic of County and District Authorities together with urban and rural Authorities.

In addition to partnership working between Local Authorities, it is notable how beneficial it is to hold discussions with key stakeholders in the planning process at an early stage of evidence gathering. This was particularly the case in terms of the scenario testing work. Joint workshops were held where open discussions and debates took place. Again, these early discussions have helped to engage stakeholders in the policy-making process, flag key issues and perspectives and build positive working relationships which can be taken forward. Furthermore, the outputs of the study will be made available to Highways England and other interested stakeholders.

Finally, the baseline reporting element of the transport work has continued to develop an improved way of working between the County Council and its consultants. Officers and consultants have been working jointly on the evidence report, with both parties bringing a different range of skills and knowledge to the project. This has helped to develop Officer skills.

Innovative thinking

The Local Authorities in the area have a good record of innovative approaches to delivering development, particularly through a varied and flexible approach to land acquisition and infrastructure delivery. The transport project has developed this further, extending innovative thinking and challenging standard approaches to strategic plan-making. Reference to the innovative nature of the scenario testing approach is highlighted in the August 2016 CIHT Futures Report 'Uncertainty Ahead, which way forward for transport?'²

The scenario testing work has demonstrated the benefits of looking more widely for potential partners and deliverers of plan-making evidence. As an example, the scenario testing work was developed and facilitated by academics from the University of West of England who brought a new perspective to transport planning. The approach advocated was complex and challenging, and encouraged the Local Authorities and stakeholders to think differently, more creatively and more freely. This can have significant benefits in terms of plan-making. It is clear that the involvement of academics brings a new perspective to delivering planning evidence. This could be applied helpfully by Local Authorities across the country.

Sharing of learning

Officers from the Local Authorities will share the learning which has resulted from this work through relevant networks, via the Department for Communities and Local Government, to Department for Transport, Planning Advisory Service, Royal Town Planning Institute and the Town and Country Planning Association.

At a more local level, there are specific examples of emerging cross-boundary plan-making taking place in the Plymouth and northern Devon areas where lessons here could be applied. Discussions could be initiated in the context of the existing Devon Duty to Cooperate Protocol³ and through the Devon Planning Officers Group which meets quarterly.

² Available at:

<http://www.ciht.org.uk/en/document-summary/index.cfm/docid/54DF664C-DDB3-4AEA-B5D50039CCF24E9C>

³ Available at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/the-duty-to-co-operate>

Considering the impact of three variable future drivers of change for future scenario planning can be complex. To ensure that the methods of this innovative approach can be shared efforts have been made to ensure the final report is accessible and understandable to a wider audience. The Authorities would be happy to hold discussions with interested parties to share widely the experiences gained to allow Authorities the opportunity to consider whether they wish to follow a similar approach.

The reports from this study will be made available in due course.

Further information

Contact Information

Lead officer:

George Marshall, Devon County Council
Principal Planning Officer: Policy and Infrastructure Development
george.marshall@devon.gov.uk
01392 383000

Further contact:

William Pratt,
Principal Transport Planning Officer
William.Pratt@devon.gov.uk
01392 383000