

South West Operations Directorate
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12 February 2026

Dear Mr Young

Exeter Plan examination - Written statement of National Highways

**Matter 3 Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Development, .
Issue 1 – Spatial Strategy and Liveable Exeter Principles – Policies S1 and S2**

National Highways is the Strategic Highway Authority, responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and has an interest in the potential impact of planned growth at Exeter on the M5 particularly junctions 29, 30 and 31 and junctions on the A38 and A30.

This statement builds on previous submissions to the Local Plan process and Statement of Common Ground between Exeter City Council and National Highways.

Q11. Would an alternative distribution within the Plan area of the same amount of new development be likely to have significantly less impact on the strategic road network?

We consider it unlikely that an alternative distribution of the same amount of new development would have significantly less impact on the strategic road network (SRN).

We are supportive of the proposed spatial strategy, which seeks to maximise brownfield sites that are close to the city centre and other local facilities, minimise the need to travel and promote opportunities for sustainable modes. The vision for a liveable and connected city, leading the way in terms of sustainability and activity levels will also limit potential adverse impacts for the SRN. This strategy is supported.

Strategic Policy H1 seeks to deliver 5,369 new dwellings on site allocations, with planning consents already in place for 5,289 new dwellings and completions of 2,311. Whilst we have not reviewed evidence to demonstrate the traffic impacts of an alternative spatial distribution within the Plan area, the scale of existing consents will limit the additional impact of proposed allocations at any one location. Access between Exeter and the SRN is provided by four junctions – M5 J29 and J30 to the east of the city, and the A30 Alphington roundabout and A38/ A379 junction to the south of the city. The junctions therefore provide

a choice of routes from the east and south. With proposed allocations already focussed on central sites or sustainable transport corridors, an alternative spatial strategy, for the dwellings not yet permitted or completed, is unlikely to materially alter impacts for any individual section or junction of the SRN.

Outside of the city centre, a number of larger residential and employment allocations are proposed in the A379 corridor which connects with M5 J30. Additional smaller sites are proposed for allocation in the Topsham area to the south of the M5. National Highways has previously accepted the impact of development in the Newcourt area, where proposed allocations for Land at Old Rydon Lane (strategic policy H1) and Sandy Park (strategic policy EJ6) are carried forward from the previous Site Allocations Plan and date back to previous improvements at M5 J30. Whilst a reduction in wider development within the A379 corridor might limit additional traffic demand through M5 J30, alternative sites would still be likely to generate demand for travel through M5 J30 given available routes into the City.

Sites within the A379 corridor and at Topsham benefit from potential access to rail services via Digby & Sowton and Newcourt. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (EVB-IF-02a) lists proposals to deliver service enhancements across the Exeter rail network, including a 15-minute service frequency between Exeter St Davids and Digby and Sowton, whilst a new active travel crossing of the M5 is also proposed to support access to Newcourt station. Both these measures will help to reduce car-borne travel demands of planned development in the A379 corridor. We also note that a Clyst Road & Newcourt Road Transportation Access Strategy (EVB-STC-18) has been prepared by Devon County Council and includes a full programme of transport measures to support sustainable growth. Whilst an increase in vehicle trips through M5 J30 is to be expected, an alternative spatial strategy is unlikely to materially alter this, and could even reduce opportunities for public transport access.

Q12. For the plan to be sound, is it necessary for there to be additional evidence, at this stage, of the likely impacts of the new development proposed in the plan on junctions 29, 30 and 31 of the M5 and on the A30, A38 and A379 roads?

We do not consider it necessary for there to be additional evidence of the likely impacts of proposed new development on the SRN.

The impacts of development within the Exeter Plan area have been incorporated into Devon County Council's strategic traffic modelling work. The work has considered the standalone impact of Exeter-only planned growth (EVB-STC-07) alongside the cumulative impacts of planned growth across Exeter, Teignbridge, Mid Devon and East Devon. The modelling of cumulative impacts has informed the Council's work on the Greater Exeter Transport Study, which proposes a range of measures to reduce and manage the travel demands of planned development.

Devon's modelling of cumulative traffic impacts has also informed National Highways' own operational assessment work for the M5 junctions (EXM-02t). Whilst the modelling work highlights the potential for material SRN impacts as a result of cumulative growth, we are of the view that Exeter's growth ambitions are best addressed through implementation of the proposed transport vision and measures to promote sustainable travel as set out in the Local Transport Plan 4 (EVB-STC-01), Bus Service Improvement Plan (EVB-STC-02), Exeter Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (EVB-STC-03), and the emerging Greater Exeter Transport Study. Brownfield development within the City of Exeter has the greatest potential

to internalise travel demand and reduce car-borne trips. We understand that Exeter presently has the second largest travel to work area in the country, and the delivery of additional housing within the City boundaries is likely to help reduce longer distance travel to access employment.

National Highways has been party to the preparation of the Greater Exeter Transport Study, and we have previously recommended that the strategy and associated measures should be recognised in Plan policies and/or infrastructure planning. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (EVB-IF-02a) now includes reference to a package of strategic, multi-modal transport measures relating to background growth and development across the sub-region to be confirmed from the emerging Greater Exeter Transport Study.

No operational assessment modelling for the SRN has been undertaken to consider the impacts of the Exeter Plan in isolation. Devon's modelling of Exeter-only planned growth suggests a moderate increase in traffic flow of around 200-300 vehicles per hour on sections of the SRN. However, National Highways is reassured that on account of the limited scale of development and complementary transport strategy no further transport evidence is necessary. Whilst a submission version Greater Exeter Transport Study is awaited, and the detail of final measures remains to be determined, we accept that no additional strategic highway improvements are likely to be required to accommodate Exeter's planned growth in isolation. Nevertheless, we have recommended that monitoring of travel outcomes should inform the future review of Local Plan delivery and the Greater Exeter Transport Strategy.

I trust that our response is helpful and assists with the Inspectors' deliberations. If you require further clarification or wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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