

Exeter Plan

Statement of Common Ground

Exeter City Council and Environment Agency

June 2025

Exeter City Council
Civic Centre
Paris Street
Exeter
EX1 1JN



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Exeter City Council (the City Council) have been preparing the Exeter Plan since late 2020. The plan has progressed through four public consultations, culminating in the Regulation 19 publication in December 2024.
- 1.2. Following the end of the publication process in February 2025 representations have been compiled and attention has turned to addressing the issues raised in the representations.
- 1.3. The Environment Agency provided a series of representations or comments to the Regulation 19 Plan. These are considered through this Statement of Common Ground.
- 1.4. This Statement of Common Ground demonstrates that the City Council and the Environment Agency have cooperated on strategic matters and that the plan is positively prepared and effective – two of the tests of soundness for plan preparation as identified by paragraph 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework¹. The document assists in presenting evidence that plans are deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working across local authority boundaries. It is also part of the evidence required to demonstrate compliance with the Duty to Cooperate.
- 1.5. This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared in accordance with the plan-making section of the Planning Practice Guidance² and meets the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004³ and the Localism Act 2011⁴.
- 1.6. Duty to cooperate meetings have taken place with the Environment Agency since before the first 'Issues Consultation' in 2021. In 2023 Exeter City Council entered into a cost recovery agreement with the Environment Agency in order to receive bespoke support in bringing the Exeter Plan forward. This demonstrates that there has been joint working between Exeter City Council and the Environment Agency since the outset of plan-making.

¹ The Exeter Plan is being prepared under the December 2023 version of the NPPF. Available here:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20231228093504/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

² Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

³ Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/13>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/110>

- 1.7. The introduction to the EA's representation states 'Overall, we welcome the Local Plan and have been pleased to work with Exeter City Council in its creation. In our view the plan is achievable yet ambitious and, whilst promoting sustainable growth, vibrancy and a thriving economy, emphasises the inherent need for restoring and enhancing its environment by promoting a nature-rich, climate resilient and adaptable city.'

2.0 Strategic matters: Spatial strategy

Broad summary of chapter content

- 2.1 The spatial chapter of the plan sets the tone for the plan as a whole and in doing so sets out the main principles for guiding the pattern and form of development in the city.
- 2.2 The spatial strategy chapter includes two policies:
- S1: Spatial strategy; and
 - S2: Liveable Exeter Principles.
- 2.3 Policy S1 includes the new spatial strategy for Exeter. The spatial strategy guides the pattern and characteristics of development in the city and the proposed development sites included in the Exeter Plan. A key strand of the new spatial strategy is to steer the majority of development to brownfield sites in order to protect the city's landscape and retain Exeter's environmental and heritage quality.
- 2.4 Policy S2 includes the Liveable Exeter principles. These set out the requirements for the standard of development that the City Council will expect for all large-scale brownfield developments. Liveable Exeter is a growth and place-making initiative governed by seven principles which have been drawn from Exeter's Vision 2040. In adopting the Liveable Exeter principles, we aim to strengthen and reinvigorate existing communities and repurpose and transform other parts of the city through high quality development.

Addressing the response of the Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 2.5 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraphs 1.6-1.7) and the positive nature of the comments received in relation to the spatial strategy reflect this.
- 2.6 The EA suggested various minor amendments to the spatial strategy chapter at the Regulation 18 Full Draft Plan stage. The majority of these changes were made and the EA's representations of support (at Regulation 19 stage) are welcome.
- 2.7 The detail of the Regulation 19 representations and responses is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency comment	Final position and suggested plan modification
Spatial Strategy	Paragraph 4.5	We support the specific reference to protection of the River Exe	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
	Policy S1	We welcome the additional wording reference to 'Climate change adaptation and resilience' in the policy.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
	Policy S1 - Bullets 7, 8 and 12	Supported for reasons of Carbon reduction and flood risk resilience and adaptation	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
	Policy S1 - Bullet 10	We welcome the wording regarding <i>enhancement</i> and <i>improvement</i> of biodiversity and the Exe ecology in this point.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
	Policy S1 – Bullet 15	We welcome this in reference to Waste water treatment works and sewerage infrastructure upgrades and assessment to ensure new development is sustainable and does not negatively impact this aspect of the environment	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

	Policy S1 – Bullet 15 principle 3	Support this, as above with reference to the sewerage infrastructure required to support growth	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
	Policy S2 – Bullet 1 principle 4	We welcome this; <i>Be adaptable and resilient to the effects of climate change;</i>	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

3.0 Strategic matters: Climate change

Broad summary of chapter content

- 3.1 We are facing huge environmental challenges caused by human interventions which are increasing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. In recognition of this, the City Council has declared a climate emergency and pledged to work towards creating a net zero carbon city by 2030. The Exeter Plan includes policies and proposals that contribute to meeting this challenging ambition and to making the most of the opportunities of a net zero carbon city, whilst adapting to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.
- 3.2 The climate change chapter includes nine policies which will support the move to a net zero city:
- CC1: Net zero Exeter;
 - CC2: Renewable and low carbon energy;
 - CC3: Local energy networks;
 - CC4: Ground-mounted photovoltaic arrays;
 - CC5: Future development standards;
 - CC6: Embodied carbon;
 - CC7: Development that is adaptive and resilient to climate change;
 - CC8: Flood risk; and
 - CC9: Water quantity and quality.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 3.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 3.4 The representations received from the EA in relation to the climate change chapter were supportive or advisory in nature.

- 3.5 Further to the Regulation 19 stage a meeting took place on the 20 March 2025 to discuss the preparation of the Statement of Common Ground and more specifically to discuss whether modifications to the Exeter Plan could help address the issues raised. A small number of minor modifications to the supporting text have been agreed by the EA in response to their representations and these should help to strengthen the Exeter Plan still further.
- 3.6 The detailed representations, responses and suggested way forward are presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position and suggested plan modification
Climate Change chapter	Whole chapter	Support overall for this chapter and its strong references to flooding, resilience and adaptation and an acknowledgement of the 'unavoidable impacts of climate change'	Support welcome	N/A	N/A
Supporting text to policy CC1: Net Zero Exeter	Paragraph 5.9	Support the following sentence and ethos 'Green infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and other nature-based solutions to flood risk also have an important role in climate change mitigation.' And then the translation of this into CC1	Support welcome	N/A	N/A

Supporting text for policy NE6: Flood Risk	Paragraph 5.32 - bullet 2	Developments with large artificial and impermeable surfaces are discouraged – suggest 'large' removed and artificial and impermeable surfaces are discouraged to aid with Combined sewer issues etc	Agreed. Suggest deleting 'large' (and inserting 'ground') so paragraph 5.32 reads: 'Developments with large artificial and impermeable ground surfaces are discouraged'.	Alteration agreed and minor modification supported	Suggest minor modification to paragraph 5.32 to read: 'Developments with large artificial and impermeable ground surfaces are discouraged'.
Supporting text to policy CC8: Flood risk	Paragraph 5.34	Only mentions precipitation as a consequence of CC, not the extreme nature i.e. storms or the increased sea level impacts on Exeter	Agreed. Suggest additional text to capture this (Source data: Met Office Exeter Climate Pack) so paragraph 5.34 reads: 'Furthermore, there may be increases in the intensity of heavy summer rainfall events and sea level will continue to rise.'	Alteration agreed and minor modification supported	Suggested minor modification to insert following text (to the end of paragraph 5.34): 'Furthermore, there may be increases in the intensity of heavy summer rainfall events and sea level will continue to rise.'
Supporting text to policy CC8:Flood risk	Paragraph 5.36	SuDS hierarchy welcomed including bullet 4 caveat re sewerage undertaker.	Support welcome.	N/A	N/A

Supporting text to policy CC9: Water quality and quantity	Paragraph 5.44	We strongly support this paragraph and policy CC9	Support welcome.	N/A	N/A
Policy CC8: Flood risk	CC8	Support this policy and its clear, strong wording.	Support welcome.	N/A	N/A
Policy CC9: Water quality and quantity	CC9	Pleased to see the water efficiency measures here and the inclusion of our recommendation regarding a reference to working with SWW and others on delivery of the DWMP and SOAP.	Support welcome.	N/A	N/A

4.0 Strategic matters: Homes

Broad summary of chapter content

- 4.1 Housing is a significant issue nationally and for Exeter. The Exeter Plan will meet the housing need for the city within the administrative boundary of Exeter City. It will also help to address the shortage of affordable homes in the city and provide the good quality accommodation we all need. Young adults, families, older people, those with disabilities, essential local workers, care leavers, students and Gypsies and Travellers all have specific housing needs which we need to meet.
- 4.2 The homes chapter includes sixteen policies which will help to address housing needs in the city:
- H1: Housing requirement;
 - H2: Housing allocations and windfalls;
 - H3: Regeneration opportunity areas;
 - H4: Affordable housing;
 - H5: Build to rent;
 - H6: Co-living housing;
 - H7: Custom and self-build housing;
 - H8: Homes for older people;
 - H9: Supported housing;
 - H10: Purpose built student accommodation;
 - H11: Gypsy and traveller accommodation;
 - H12: Residential conversions and houses in multiple occupation;
 - H13: Loss of residential accommodation;
 - H14: Accessible homes;
 - H15: Housing density and size mix; and
 - H16: Residential amenity and healthy homes.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 4.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 4.4 The EA made a representation in relation to H12: Residential conversions and house in multiple occupation, suggesting an additional criteria relating to requiring 'no net increase in discharge to any sewer/drain/watercourse' (or similar).
- 4.5 Further to the Statement of Common Ground meeting that took place on the 20 March 2025 an exchange of emailed communication concluded that this issue was suitably addressed through existing policies (CC7: Development that is adaptive and resilient to climate change, CC8: Flood risk and CC9: Water quantity and quality), but that additional supporting text could helpfully be inserted to ensure that the potential for HMO's to harm drainage or water quality was not overlooked.
- 4.6 The detailed representation, response and suggested way forward are presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position and suggested plan modification
Homes	Policy H12	We would reiterate our previous comments about HMOs and the impact on the combined sewer network; We would urge that this policy H12 includes 'no net increase in discharge to any sewer/drain/watercourse' (or at the least a reference to developers having to consider the foul flows and minimise the impact through attenuation of the surface water on site where they both go to a combined sewer through soakaways, water butts, grey water recycling/rwh etc). HMOs have the potential to have a huge increase in flows to the sewer and thus cause CSOs if this isn't included.	Changes to CC8: Flood Risk and CC9: Water quantity and quality (in response to Reg 18 stage consultation) and the addition of new policy CC7: Development that is adaptive and resilient to climate change (also in response to Reg 18 stage consultation) are thought to suitably address flooding, drainage, and combined sewer issues. However, additional supporting text could helpfully be inserted to ensure that the potential for HMO's to harm drainage or water quality is not overlooked. Additional text to read: 'Due to their potential to intensify foul flows, it will be important for HMO proposals to comply with policies CC7, CC8 and CC9 and demonstrate that there will be no harm to drainage or water quality.'	Alteration agreed and minor modification supported.	Suggested minor modification to insert additional text into paragraph 6.71 'Due to their potential to intensify foul flows, it will be important for HMO proposals to comply with policies CC7, CC8 and CC9 and demonstrate that there will be no harm to drainage or water quality.'

5.0 Strategic matters: Economy and jobs

Broad summary of chapter content

- 4.7 Exeter is at the heart of a large functional economic market area which reflects a significant travel to work area. The Exeter Plan needs to support the economy and green growth by identifying the employment space and infrastructure we need. This will help to increase prosperity and wellbeing.
- 4.8 The economy and jobs chapter includes six policies which will help to address the economic and employment needs of the city:
- EJ1: Economic growth;
 - EJ2: Retention of employment land;
 - EJ3: New forms of employment provision;
 - EJ4: Access to jobs and skills;
 - EJ5: Provision of local services in employment areas; and
 - EJ6: New transformational employment allocations.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

No representations were raised regarding the economy and jobs chapter at Regulation 19 Publication stage.

6.0 Strategic matters: Retail and the future of our centres

Broad summary of chapter content

- 6.1 The function of the city, local and district centres is changing. Retail is likely to be just one part of their future; a greater variety of uses need to be included in the centres to widen their attractiveness and appeal. Great care will need to be taken to protect the city centre from competition from out of centre retail to ensure its ongoing health.
- 6.2 The retail and future of our centres policy includes two policies which will help to address the future challenges facing our centres:
- RFC1: The future of our centres; and
 - RFC2: Development in, and affecting, within our centres.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

No representations were raised regarding the retail and the future of our centres chapter at Regulation 19 Publication stage.

7.0 Strategic matters: Sustainable transport and communications

Broad summary of chapter content

- 7.1 The way we travel will be vital to the success of Exeter. It will be central to achieving net zero carbon, growing prosperity, healthy lifestyles and making improvements to our natural and historic environments. In future, travel will not just be about whether we walk or drive, digital communications will also be vital. The Exeter Plan will help to ensure that the city is resilient to changes in travel, supporting innovative development in the right places, providing real options and promoting fresh approaches to transport.
- 7.2 The sustainable transport and communications chapter of the Exeter Plan includes nine policies which will help to inform evolving transport and communications in the city:
- STC1: Sustainable movement;
 - STC2: The transport hierarchy;
 - STC3: Supporting active travel;
 - STC4: Supporting public transport;
 - STC5: Supporting more sustainable forms of car use;

- STC6: Travel plans;
- STC7: Safeguarding transport infrastructure;
- STC8: Motorway service area; and
- STC9: Digital communications.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 7.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 7.4 The EA has made a representation of support for policy STC1: Sustainable Movement, specifically regarding the reference to electric vehicles and mobility hubs.
- 7.5 The detail of the representation and response is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position and suggested plan modification
Sustainable transport and communications	STC1: Sustainable Transport - bullet f	We support the reference to 'significantly increasing provision for electric vehicles and enabling provision of mobility hubs' inline with our climate change remit	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

8.0 Strategic matters: Natural environment

Broad summary of chapter content

- 8.1 Exeter has a high quality natural environment, with Valley Parks and city parks, water bodies including the River Exe and the Exeter Ship Canal and many public rights of way. The hills surrounding the city give Exeter a distinctive landscape setting, whilst the city contains a rich variety of wildlife habitats. The Exeter Plan will be a key tool to accommodating appropriate development to meet the city's needs whilst protecting key natural environmental assets.
- 8.2 The natural environment chapter of the Exeter Plan includes seven policies which will help to accommodate development in a way which protects and enhances the natural environment:
- NE1: Landscape setting areas;
 - NE2: Valley Parks;
 - NE3: Biodiversity;
 - NE4: Green infrastructure;
 - NE5: Green circle;
 - NE6: Urban greening factor; and
 - NE7: Urban tree canopy cover.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 8.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 8.4 The EA suggested various minor amendments to the natural environment chapter at the Regulation 18 Full Draft Plan stage. The majority of these changes were made and the EA's representations of support (at Regulation 19 stage) for these changes are welcome.
- 8.5 The detail of the representations and responses is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position and suggested plan modification
Natural Environment	Policy NE1: c - bullet 7	We support the inclusion of 'Managing flood risk and delivering other forms of climate resilience,' into this policy	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
Natural Environment	NE2: -bullet c and f	We welcome the inclusion of these.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
Natural Environment	NE3	We are pleased to see the incorporation of our suggested wording here; 'protect, enhance, connect and restore biodiversity'	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
Natural Environment	Green Infrastructure Paragraph 10.24	We welcome the reference to the LNRS here	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
Natural Environment	10.40	We support the urban tree canopy cover policy and the inclusion of the following reference in the pre-ambble 'Existing trees should be retained where possible and the felling of existing healthy trees will need to be justified.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

9.0 Strategic matters: History and heritage

Broad summary of chapter content

- 8.6 Exeter's rich historic environment makes the city unique and continues to shape the city's culture and identity today. New development can raise challenges for our historic environment but the Exeter Plan provides an opportunity to conserve and enhance Exeter's heritage assets whilst exploring cultural links and celebrating the contribution of heritage to the character of the city.
- 8.7 The history and heritage chapter of the Exeter Plan includes five policies which will help to accommodate development in a way which protects and enhances the historic environment:
- HH1: Conserving and enhancing heritage assets;
 - HH2: Conservation areas;
 - HH3: Archaeology;
 - HH4: Heritage assets and climate change; and
 - HH5: Conserving and enhancing Exeter City Walls.

Addressing the response of the Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 8.8 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 8.9 The EA has made a representation of support for policy HH4: Heritage assets and climate change. This support is welcomed.
- 8.10 The detail of the representation of support and response is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
History and heritage	HH4: Heritage assets and climate change	We support the inclusion of this specific policy	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

10.0 Strategic matters: Culture and tourism

Broad summary of chapter content

- 10.1 Exeter is a historic but modern city whose compact size and location means it offers a great balance between urban and rural life. Enhancing Exeter's cultural offering will be key to future success, building the sense of place and belonging in the city. Exeter is committed to being a healthy and active city with culture embedded as standard to enable people to live fulfilled lives. This will help to promote Exeter as a city of culture and further drive the identity and attraction of the city. The Exeter Plan seeks to protect existing culture and identity whilst supporting development to play its part in enhancing cultural provision.
- 10.2 The culture and tourism chapter of the Exeter Plan includes two policies which seek to explore, enhance and celebrate the cultural richness of the city and its profile as a prominent tourist destination whilst specifying the role for development:
- C1: Protecting and enhancing cultural and tourism facilities; and
 - C2: Development and cultural provision.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

No representations were raised regarding the culture and tourism chapter at Regulation 19 Publication stage.

11.0 Strategic matters: High quality places and design

Broad summary of chapter content

- 11.1 The quality of the places in which we live and work and that we visit is fundamental for so many reasons, including to support our health and wellbeing, attract investment, generate pride in our city and help achieve our net zero ambitions. Development offers opportunities to create high quality places that respond to Exeter's distinct characteristics, reflect local culture and the historic environment, provide appropriate green space and integrate with existing communities, promoting social cohesion and healthy lifestyles.
- 11.2 The high quality places and design chapter of the Exeter Plan includes three policies which seek to deliver the development we need in high quality, liveable, connected places:
- D1: Design principles;
 - D2: Designing-out crime; and
 - D3: Advertisements.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 11.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 11.4 The EA has made a representation of support for the high quality places and design chapter specifically in relation to policy D1: Design principles, bullet b. This support is welcomed.
- 11.5 The detail of the representation of support and response is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
High quality places and design	D1	We support the various references to climate, carbon and adaptation in reference to design in particular bullet b in policy D1	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

12.0 Strategic matters: Health and wellbeing

Broad summary of chapter content

- 12.1 The Exeter Plan will play a part in improving health and wellbeing by providing high quality housing, supporting job creation, enabling increases in physical activity, supporting active travel, enhancing nature, supporting improvements in air quality and supporting the delivery of the health infrastructure we need.
- 12.2 The health and wellbeing chapter of the Exeter Plan includes two policies which promote inclusive development which supports communities in becoming healthier and more active:
- HW1: Health and wellbeing; and
 - HW2: Environmental quality, pollution and contaminated land.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 12.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 12.4 The representations received from the EA in relation to the health and wellbeing chapter were supportive or advisory in nature.
- 12.5 Further to the Regulation 19 stage a Statement of Common Ground meeting took place on the 20 March 2025 where changes to the supporting text for this chapter were discussed. A small number of minor modifications to the supporting text have been agreed by the EA in response to their representations and these should help to strengthen the Exeter Plan still further.
- 12.6 The detailed representations, responses and suggested way forward are presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
Health and Wellbeing	HW2 First sentence	This needs correcting as it currently states developments will only be permitted where there WOULD be an unacceptable impact: 'Development proposals will only be permitted where, individually and cumulatively, taking account of proposed mitigation and remediation, there would be unacceptable impacts on:...'	Agreed. Text to be amended so Policy HW2 reads: 'Development proposals will only be permitted where, individually and cumulatively, taking account of proposed mitigation and remediation, there would be no unacceptable impacts on:...'	Alteration agreed and minor modification supported.	Suggested main modification to insert the word 'no' so that policy reads: 'Development proposals will only be permitted where, individually and cumulatively, taking account of proposed mitigation and remediation, there would be no unacceptable impacts on:...'
	HW2 First bullet a	We are pleased to see the removal of the word local from 'Environmental Quality' in line with our previous suggestion.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

	HW2 Second bullet a	We would reiterate; We note the end of the policy says ...'made suitable for the proposed use..' however the concept that a site should be 'suitable for use' underlies the Environment Agency's approach to remediation of historic contamination. 'Suitable for use' means suitable for the environment as a whole, not just for use by people. Protecting groundwater and surface water may mean carrying out work on land affected by pollution over and above that required to make the land suitable for the proposed development and to protect human health. We would suggest altering this to say suitable for use and remove 'the proposed'	Agreed. Text to be amended as suggested to add clarity and avoid confusion so that criteria a of policy NW2 reads: 'The land is or can be made suitable for the proposed use;'	Alteration agreed and minor modification supported.	Suggested main modification to delete 'the proposed' from policy HW2 so criteria a reads: 'The land is or can be made suitable for the proposed use;'
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13.0 Strategic matters: Infrastructure and facilities

Broad summary of chapter content

- 13.1 The Exeter Plan is vital in identifying the infrastructure that we need, ensuring it is provided in the right way, at the right time and in the right place. Working with key infrastructure partners will be essential to ensure that infrastructure needs can be met in this way. The City Council will continue discussions relating to cross-boundary infrastructure provision in the context of the development planned in Exeter but also close to the city in East Devon and Teignbridge and also Mid Devon.
- 13.2 The infrastructure and facilities chapter of the Exeter Plan includes five policies which will support the provision of appropriate infrastructure, address development viability and support the provision of community facilities, open space, play areas, allotments and sport:
- IF1: Delivery of infrastructure;
 - IF2: Viability;
 - IF3: Community facilities;
 - IF4: Open space, play areas, allotments and sport; and
 - IF5: New cemetery provision.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 13.3 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 13.4 The EA suggested a minor amendments to the supporting text for policy IF5: New cemetery provision at the Regulation 18 Full Draft Plan stage. This change was made and the EA's representation of support (at Regulation 19 stage) for this change are welcome.
- 13.5 The detail of the representation and response is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
Infrastructure	New cemeteries	We are pleased to see this additional detail included as per our Reg 18 proposed wording.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A

14.0 Site allocations

Broad summary of chapter content

- 14.1 The Exeter Plan allocates a series of sites for development. The site allocations (included in Policies H2 and EJ6) have been selected in accordance with the spatial strategy for the city set out in Policy S1.
- 14.2 The majority of site allocation development will take place on five strategic mixed use brownfield sites that are located close to the city centre or key public transport hubs. The sites are identified in Policy H2 and were part of the original Liveable Exeter work.
- 14.3 Thirty-three sites are allocated for predominantly residential or residential development in Policy H2. These make up the balance of our housing requirement and provide for choice and competition in the market. The majority of the sites are brownfield in line with the spatial strategy. Some of the sites are greenfield, these sites helping to provide a mix of development opportunities to enable housing 135 delivery throughout the Plan period.
- 14.4 Three employment sites are allocated in Policy EJ6. These sites will help play an important role in meeting employment needs and supporting the growth of the city.

Addressing the response of Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

- 14.5 ECC has been working closely with the Environment Agency throughout the plan-making process (as detailed in paragraph 1.6-1.7).
- 14.6 The EA identified one potential soundness issue in relation to two sites allocated in policy H2 (Hamlin Road and Belle Isle Depot) for which Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk assessment (SFRA) evidence work had not been completed. This omission, which occurred as the result of a miscommunication between the EA and ECC, is unfortunate but has now been resolved through the commission of additional work from consultants JBA. This additional work shows that the site at Hamlin would be capable of passing the exception test and therefore, in flood risk terms, the site is suitable for allocation. However, unfortunately this additional work has also concluded that the Belle Isle Depot site is not suitable for allocation. A suggested main modification is proposed to address the deletion of Belle Isle Depot from the Exeter Plan.

- 14.7 Further to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan publication, meetings, to discuss the preparation of this Statement of Common Ground and specifically to address how the above issues might be addressed, took place on the 20 March 2025 and on 16 April 2025. At the second of these meetings the new evidence was discussed and the way forward agreed.
- 14.8 The Environment Agency also highlighted two dates in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, relating to sewage infrastructure delivery, which required amendment. It was agreed, following an exchange of emails with South West Water, that these dates should be amended.
- 14.9 The detail of the representations and responses is presented in the table below.

Issue	Element of the plan (policy or paragraph)	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
Evidence: Level 2 SFRA	Policy H2: Site allocations	The incorporation of 2 allocated sites which are fully/partially within flood zone 3 and which are, at present not included in the SFRA2 and for one no practicable solution is evident, we consider this may bring into question the soundness of the Plan in relation to it being 'consistent with national policy' on this matter. Hamlin Lane (No 60), and Belle Isle (No. 72) are both within Flood Zone 3a. (for full representation wording see Appendix B)	Additional SFRA2 evidence work has been undertaken by flood risk consultants JBA for Hamlin Lane and Belle Isle, to address this evidence gap. The Hamlin Lane site SFRA2 evidence confirms that the site is capable of passing the exception test and therefore, in flood risk terms, the site is suitable for allocation. However, please note, because of other additional work on suitability (reflected though the HELAA) it has been determined to suggest a main modification to delete Hamlin Lane from the Exeter Plan. For the Belle Isle Depot site the additional evidence suggests that the site would struggle to pass the exception test and therefore the site should not be allocated. Suggest the Belle Isle Depot site should be deleted from the Exeter Plan.	Deletion of Belle Island Depot and Drive agreed. Main modification proposal supported.	Suggest main modification to delete the allocation of Belle Isle Depot from the Exeter Plan: H2: Housing allocations and windfalls ... Belle Isle Depot, Belle Isle Drive 72 40 And associated modification to delete Belle Isle Depot from Housing trajectory: Belle Isle Depot 0-0-40-0-40

Evidence: Level 2 SFRA	Policy H2: site allocations	The consultation Level 2 SFRA provides a good assessment of the flood hazards for the selected sites and is in line with the NPPF and national guidance on producing SFRA's and addresses our previous comments on the draft report. The report explains the flood hazards and required design requirement/impacts to make the site safe (without increase risk to third parties) for the selected sites, and should permit the LPA to carryout the Exception Test and make an informed decision.	Support welcomed.	N/A	N/A
Evidence: Level 2 SFRA	Policy H2: site allocations	We would suggest that section (5.1.2) on flooding duration is still a little uncertain, and may be unclear to some readers, however	Site table and maps have been completed and reviewed and agreed by the Environment Agency. The site table and maps make clear the flood duration.	Agreed.	N/A

		if flood duration is better covered in the accompanying site table/maps that should be sufficient for all audiences to understand.			
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Evidence: Level 2 SRFA	Policy H2: site allocations	Currently the site tables and maps are not included in the consultation, but we expect these shortly. These will be required to fully explain the flood risk issues for each potential allocation site, and the likely solutions/scale of impact on each development design and changes to existing buildings. The issues of Safe Access and Egress should also be covered with potential solutions suggested and linked to other ongoing technical projects.	Site table and maps have been completed and reviewed by the Environment Agency. The site table and maps fully address all relevant issues.	Agreed.	N/A
Evidence: Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Sewage infrastructure delivery dates	The dates referenced in the IDP for the 'Upgrade to Countess Wear sewage treatment works to serve wider area' are dated 2031-2036. Given these are deemed critical we consider it essential	Agreed. These dates (relating to the upgrade of the Countess Wear sewage treatment works and the delivery of the East of Exeter sewage treatment work) should be amended so they are consistent with the South West Water Business Plan.	Agreed.	Suggested amendment to IDP evidence document to amend date for delivery of 'upgrade to Countess Wear sewage treatment works' to state 2030 And

		that this date in the IDP be revised to echo the South West Water Business Plan which states a delivery date of 2030 for this (rather than the 2031-2036 currently in the IDP) Similarly the additional East of Exeter Sewage treatment works in East Devon is set out for a date of 2031-2041 in the IDP, however the SWW business plan states 'our new East of Exeter WWTW will be designed and delivered by 2035', so we strongly feel this too should be altered in the IDP to bring the date nearer for this critical infrastructure delivery.			Suggested amendment to IDP evidence document to amend date for delivery of 'East of Exeter sewage treatment works' to state 2035.
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15. Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

Explanation of the SA and HRA

- 14.10 To accompany the Exeter Plan, Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) have been undertaken at various stages of the plan-preparation process.
- 14.11 SA and HRA reports were provided for consultation alongside the Publication Regulation 19 draft of the Exeter Plan. Representors were able to provide representations on both these documents.

Addressing the response of the Environment Agency to the Regulation 19 Exeter Plan

Sustainability Appraisal

- 14.12 The Environment Agency, as one of the three key consultation bodies, has been consulted throughout the SA process.
- 14.13 In response to the Regulations 19 Publication stage the Environment Agency has highlighted the importance of prioritising effective mitigation strategies alongside securing financing and delivery for water infrastructure and recognising the potential for impacts on the combined sewer network.
- 14.14 ECC is pleased to have addressed the Environment Agency's previous comments, including through the inclusion of a new policy CC7: Development that is adaptive and resilient to climate change, and additional work on the IDP and the HRA. ECC also welcomes the Environment Agency's clear statement that 'We are confident that the Plan sufficiently addresses these impacts on water quality, thereby safeguarding amenity, ecology, and economic interests.'
- 14.15 The detail of the representations and responses is presented in the table below.

Evidence document	Issue	Environment Agency's representation	ECC comment	Environment Agency's comment	Final position
SA	General comments	We appreciate the opportunity to follow up on our previous response regarding the Plan's performance against the sustainability appraisal objectives. We have no substantial comments on this matter. The sustainability appraisal rightly highlights the conflicts associated with proposed housing allocations near flood zones 2 and 3 in the city. It is expected that these housing allocations will reflect an overall negative impact when assessed against SA Objective 13. Ultimately, it will be the responsibility of the council to evaluate housing allocation applications in accordance with relevant policies designed to mitigate development risks in flood-prone areas, ensuring that any subsequent development is deemed sustainable. Given the limited alternatives for housing allocations, it is crucial to prioritise effective mitigation strategies, alongside securing financing and delivery for water infrastructure. These elements are vital for the successful implementation of the plan. Additionally, we believe it is essential	ECC is pleased to have addressed the Environment Agency's previous comments (at Reg 18 stage). The importance of flood risk, mitigation and water quantity and quality are recognised through the inclusion of policies CC7: Development that is adaptive and resilient to climate change, CC8: Flood risk, and CC9: Water quantity and quality. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) addresses the infrastructure requirements to accommodate the scale of development envisaged by the Exeter Plan.	N/A	N/A

		for the appraisal to consider the cumulative effects of further development in conjunction with climate change on the combined sewer network. We are confident that the Plan sufficiently addresses these impacts on water quality, thereby safeguarding amenity, ecology, and economic interests.	The Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Exeter Plan has also addressed hydrological issues, specifically water supply and water quality, concluding that 'The outcome of the Water Resources Management Plan and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan and their respective Habitat Regulations Assessment indicate that adverse effects can be ruled out alone or in combination for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar with respect to hydrological issues.'		
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Habitat Regulations Assessment

12.7 No representations were provided regarding the Habitat Regulations Assessment at the Regulation 19 Publication stage.

16.0 Governance, review and signoff

- 15.1. The parties agree that this statement is an accurate representation of matters discussed and issues agreed upon, or where there are areas of disagreement, this statement documents the issue, and that both parties confirm their respective position.
- 15.2. It is agreed that these discussions will inform the Examination of the Exeter Plan (the local plan). Both parties will continue to work collaboratively to meet the Duty to Cooperate obligations and will both continue to work proactively on the key strategic cross boundary issues identified in this document.

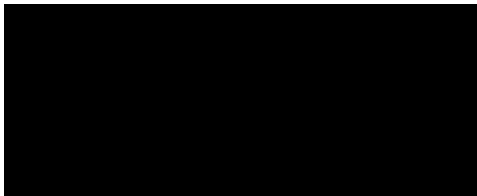
Signed:



Name: Roger Clotworthy

Position: Head of City Development, Exeter City Council

Signed:



Name: Steve Marks

Position: Environment Planning & Engagement Manager

Appendix A:**ECC and the Environment Agency: Strategic matters summary matrix**

Strategic matters	Agreement (A), Agreement with suggested modification (AM) or outstanding issues (X)
Spatial strategy	A
Climate change	AM
Homes	AM
Economy and jobs	A
Retail and the future of our centres	A
Sustainable transport and communications	A
Natural environment	A
History and heritage	A
Culture and tourism	A
High quality places and design	A
Health and wellbeing	AM
Infrastructure and facilities	A
Site allocations	AM
Sustainability Appraisal	A
Habitat Regulations Assessment	A

Appendix B:

Full text of representation in relation to Strategic Flood Risk Assessment level 2 evidence

In accordance with Paragraph 36 of the NPPF, the soundness tests must be applied to an emerging plan. We consider the plan to be sound, and support it in relation to the first 3 tests – Positively prepared, Justified and Effective. However due to the incorporation of 2 allocated sites which are fully/partially within flood zone 3 and which are, at present not included in the SFRA2 and for one no practicable solution is evident, we consider this may bring into question the soundness of the Plan in relation to it being ‘consistent with national policy’ on this matter. Hamlin Lane (No. 60), and Belle Isle (No. 72) are both within Flood Zone 3a.

National policy states in Chapter 14 that *‘para 170. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. para 171. Strategic policies should be informed by a strategic flood risk assessment, and should manage flood risk from all sources. They should consider cumulative impacts in, or affecting, local areas susceptible to flooding, and take account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards.’*

We consider that the adoption of these sites for residential, more vulnerable development, without their assessment through the SFRA and without a plausible solution option, renders these allocations not currently in accordance with National Guidance or the principles of sustainable development.

Mitigation:

In order to overcome this issue

Hamlin Lane – This will only need to discuss the site rather than any modelling/full site table. The site is partial FZ3a rather than all of it so given the new NPPF para 175, only needs to say that X % of the site will need to be able to convey the overland flood flows through the site (from Hamlin Lane to the watercourse) and may need to adjust the access road alignment/camber, a flow route of

least 5m wide & 0.6m deep, and the site's edge along the watercourse will need to provide access for maintenance and fully consider erosion/flood levels.

Belle Island – Previous investigation of the site tried to arrive at a safe solution by proposed raising of the site, but that increased risk to third parties (Match Factory area) no safe solution has thus been demonstrated to the EA. The Exceptions Test can't be passed until a viable solution is identified as likely and deliverable. It is possible that further modelling could demonstrate that a proportion of the site may be able to be made safe without causing harm to third parties.