

# Agenda Item

**Executive Board**

**1 August 2007**

**S7/12**



## **University of Exeter Science Park - Responses to Issues and Options Report and Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options)**

### **Summary**

An Issues and Options Report for the University of Exeter Science Park Supplementary Planning Document was published for public consultation in December 2006. Two reports have now been produced: one summarising the consultation responses received and setting out the preferred options for the SPD and a second which is the Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options) itself with a summary table of the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment. The draft SPD is recommended to be approved for public consultation.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. The East Devon District Council: University of Exeter Science Park Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options) be approved for public consultation.**
- 2. The Head of Planning and Countryside (following discussion with Broadclyst and Clyst Valley Ward Members) be given delegated authority to organise public consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document**

#### **a) Reasons for Recommendation**

The East Devon Local Development Scheme sets out detail for the production of the Science Park SPD and Executive Board approval is required for public consultation to be undertaken. The explanatory memorandum to amendment 2 to the 2004 Regulations relating to local authorities functions and responsibilities states that supplementary planning documents are to be the responsibility of an authority's executive.

#### **b) Alternative Options**

The development of a Science Park to the east of Exeter in East Devon is a proposal in the adopted Devon Structure Plan and is a key element of employment growth east of the City as recognised in the New Growth Point initiative. The alternative to producing a Supplementary Planning Document for the development to provide a basis for the grant of planning permission would be to include the proposal in the Core Strategy and/or East of Exeter Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP). However, the JAAP has to go through the process required for Development Plan Documents and is not programmed to be adopted until 2010. This would delay realising Exeter's economic potential contrary to the Council's aspirations.

### **c) Risk Considerations**

The Science Park development is a proposal in the adopted Structure Plan, but it is not in the adopted Local Plan, and has yet to be included in the Council's proposed Core Strategy or East of Exeter Joint Area Action Plan. Thus the precise location for the proposal is not contained within the Development Plan which would provide the firmest basis for determining a subsequent planning application. This Supplementary Planning Document is the best way available in the short term to progress the proposal, as it will provide a stronger basis for making a decision than simply dealing with the proposal as a departure from the Development Plan. Nevertheless, there is a degree of risk of challenge to a subsequent planning application for the development which could delay implementation and the delivery of economic growth and high quality jobs.

### **d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

The Council (in conjunction with partner bodies – Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, the Met Office and the University of Exeter) has commissioned the consultancy firm Atkins to produce the SPD. The total cost of the commission being £63,000 and the East Devon District Council contribution being £17,666 (other contributors are Devon County Council £17,666, Exeter City Council £17,666 and Exeter University £10,000) The East Devon Local Development Scheme provides policy and timetable considerations for SPD production.

### **e) Date for Review of Decision**

Feedback on the public consultation will be reported to the Executive Board later this year and, with any amendments considered necessary, the Supplementary Planning Document will be adopted.

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## **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Devon Structure Plan, adopted in October 2004 and covering the period from 2001 to 2016, includes policy ST19 that provides for a number of "*Strategic Development Sites for Employment*" in Devon. One of these is at the Exeter PUA and is referred to as "*East Devon: Science Park (25ha)*". The Structure Plan does not specifically allocate a site for the Science Park. However, the Structure Plan Key Diagram (Inset A) indicates a location for the Science Park (by the way of a purple letter E on a map and accompanying text reading "*Science Park (25ha)*"). This location lies to the east of junction 29 of the M5 motorway and to the north of the A30. The Structure Plan Key Diagram shows the inter-modal site and Skypark and the new community (Cranbrook) lying to the east of the Science Park.
- 1.2 On the basis of this clear locational steer in the Structure Plan land at Redhayes has been identified for the Science Park.
- 1.3 The Executive Board at its meeting on 4 July endorsed the University of Exeter Science Park Business Plan and, subject to conditions, resolved to make an investment in the development of the Science Park.

## **2.0 Procedure for SPD Production**

- 2.1 The SPD will form a part of the East Devon Local Development Framework. The Draft SPD (preferred options) will be subject to public consultation after which, and again following amendments to take on board comments received, it will be adopted by the Council as SPD.
- 2.2 An Issues and Options report for the SPD was published in December 2006 and responses were required by 5 February 2007. A report of the consultation responses received which also recommends preferred options is attached.

- 2.3 Running in parallel and integrated with SPD production is a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SA/SEA) of the SPD. A Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment for the SPD was published in January 2006. This was the subject of consultation with statutory bodies, Parish Councils, Ward Members and adjoining residents. A copy was placed in the members' area and was reported in The Knowledge on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2006. The responses received were considered in the preparation of Issues and Options. The SA/SEA is a formal requirement, and is designed to ensure that key environmental and sustainability issues, and potential impacts, are considered at the SPD preparation stage, and before any development proposals begin to emerge. In this way it is intended that the advice given in the SPD meets best and most appropriate sustainability standards and objectives.

### **3.0 Highway Issues Raised at the Science Park Issues and Options Exhibition**

- 3.1 A number of detailed highway issues were raised at the exhibition which were not directly related to the SPD. These are set out below with a response formulated after discussion with the Highways Agency and Devon County Council.

- 3.2 **Issue:** Many people complained about the traffic lights at Junction 29 going green for eastbound traffic from both the M5 and Exeter at the same time - giving a racetrack start feel if you need to weave across. A number of people had experienced being unable to leave the A30 at the Blackhorse slip and had to carry on to the airport junction and double back, others always joined the motorway at J 30 and left at J 29 so they didn't need to weave to reach the slip road. Why can't a separate phase be introduced for each traffic stream?

**Response:** This has not been done as it would add to delay overall at the junction with the possibility of traffic backing up onto the motorway. The issue with traffic light phasing at M5 J29 will be addressed through the major bid submission for a Phase 2 infrastructure solution to the East of Exeter developments. A proposal for these improvements was recently the subject of a consultation exercise by Devon County Council.

- 3.3 **Issue:** Why when travelling westbound on the old A30 at Blackhorse Inn isn't the priority to bear left onto the overbridge to join the new A30 instead of continuing west - which has resulted in drivers travelling the wrong way down the eastbound slip road? A T junction here for traffic travelling east would also help to slow traffic speeds. In addition almost everyone who came to the exhibition living on Honiton Road/ Endsleigh Crescent complained about excessive traffic speeds of eastbound traffic.

**Response:** The layout of the Blackhorse junction was designed by consultants working for the Highways Agency as part of the overall new A30 dual carriageway scheme some years ago, and it would thus have been subject to a full consultation and Public Inquiry process. In respect to the future, the current arrangement would need to be reconsidered in the light of the major scheme which is being promoted at J29'

- 3.4 **Issue:** How much traffic can the Clyst Honiton Bypass take and what happens when this level is exceeded?

**Response** The Clyst Honiton Bypass is to primarily to enable the development of 2,200 dwellings at Cranbrook and approx 70% of Skypark and further development would require Phase 2 infrastructure requirements, which are currently being worked up, and in the longer term a Phase 3 of infrastructure improvements (yet to be considered) would be likely to be needed.

- 3.5 **Issue:** How much extra traffic on the Blackhorse Lane slips is envisaged to be generated by the various proposals to the east of Exeter?

**Response:** The intention is that once Clyst Honiton Bypass (the Phase 1 access strategy) is open, the traffic lights at the point where it meets the old A30 will give strong priority to bypass traffic and dissuade car traffic use of Blackhorse junction. The Phase 2 access strategy has not yet been finalised but the option which is being worked up in detail for submission to the Department of Transport as a major scheme bid, is to introduce an improved M5 junction 29 which will give access to the proposed Science Park, and an alternative access to the old A30. Under this arrangement the existing Blackhorse slips will be closed. In this preferred phase 2 arrangement, it is expected that the Clyst Honiton Bypass will continue to provide the main access to the area although it is expected that some traffic will use the old A30 to approach the new east of Exeter developments dependent on traffic conditions.

#### **4.0 Draft SPD**

- 4.1 A copy of the draft SPD is attached. The SPD, upon adoption, will provide detailed planning and design guidance for the development of the Science Park at the Redhayes location. However, it also establishes the 'Vision' for the Science Park which will help to define, through development principles, its role, function and character. The key objective will be to achieve sustainable high quality development that will fulfill precisely the Science Park need and definition. The SPD provides clear guidance on a range of considerations that will steer the development proposals and provide a framework for drawing up a masterplan and consideration of any planning application/s and associated conditions and planning obligations to be sought.

#### **5.0 Consultation on the Draft SPD**

- 5.1 The Draft SPD will be subject to a six week public consultation exercise and this is proposed to include a one day public exhibition where display boards will set out key themes and issues and the consultants and Council officers will be available to advise on the proposals.

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#### **Legal Implications**

No legal observations at this stage.

#### **Financial Implications**

This Council's contribution to the consultancy was paid in 2006/07.

#### **Background Papers**

- Devon to 2016 (Devon Structure Plan 2001 to 2016).
- East Devon District Council: University of Exeter Science Park Supplementary Planning Document – Scoping Report for Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment
- East Devon District Council: University of Exeter Science Park Supplementary Planning Document – Issues and Options Report (December 2006).
- East Devon District Council: University of Exeter Science Park Supplementary Planning Document – File of responses to the Issues and Options Report.
- Minute 47 of Executive Board meeting of 4 July 2007 endorsing the University of Exeter Science Park Business Plan and, subject to conditions, to making an investment in the development of the Science Park.

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Executive Board

1 August 2007