

Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment

Campaign for south West Exeter Smarter Travel  
(by email)

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Dear CWEST,

**Re: South West Exeter Transport Plans – request for review process**

Thank you for your open letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in respect of the above - please accept my apologies for the delay in replying. I have provided a response below, addressing your points raised under the three headings.

**The case for a review process**

It is worth reiterating that the proposals for South West Exeter have been examined in public by Government-appointed Planning Inspectors for both the Exeter Core Strategy and the Teignbridge Local Plan. As part of these processes, the levels of new development for South West Exeter had to be justified by the local planning authorities in terms of meeting the needs of the area, future economic growth and the provision of supporting infrastructure. The South West Exeter proposals have now been endorsed and adopted by Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council. The County Council is therefore continuing to work closely with the District Councils and developers on the basis of these infrastructure plans.

The proposals for South West Exeter are a multi-modal package, with measures to support walking and cycling, bus, Park & Ride and rail use. Highway improvements including new junctions, widening of Bridge Road and local measures are planned. The balance of sustainable transport to highway measures is considered reasonable.

In terms of a review of the proposals, Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council, supported by the County Council, have held a number of consultation events in the Alphington area, including workshops on the transport proposals, which have fed into the SW Exeter Development Brief. In this respect, there have been several opportunities for people to review and challenge the proposals.

A County Council officer attended the City Council's Scrutiny Community Committee in March, which involved City Councillors, CWEST, the Exeter Civic Society, Transition Exeter and a member of the Chamber of Commerce. At this meeting, officers from the County Council, City Council and the Managing Director of Stagecoach were cross-examined extensively on a number of transport-related themes.

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Strategic Director Place Heather Barnes

At the meeting, it was explained that the County Council were 4 years into a 15 year Local Transport Plan. To date, well over £50m has been spent in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point area, which includes delivering Newcourt and Cranbrook stations and the Tithebarn Link Road, which are due to be completed this summer. This year work will start on Marsh Barton station and Bridge Road widening, which incorporates further enhancements to the Exe Estuary Trail. These are all significant transport schemes aimed at managing congestion in Exeter. It would therefore seem sensible to review the transport strategy once these schemes are complete.

With regard to your statement that the events listed in your letter directly impact on the current package of proposals for South West Exeter. The changing financial landscape has meant that there is less funding directly available to the County Council (i.e. in the form of Local Transport Plan (LTP) funds); however, the proposals were always planned to be funded by a combination of S106, CIL and Growth Deal funding. In recent years, the County Council has used a significant proportion of its LTP funding to forward design schemes and get schemes 'shovel-ready' to take advantage of Government funding opportunities. Despite the reduced funding, this approach will continue but with increased focus on schemes that specifically unlock economic growth at strategic development sites across Devon. The County Council Cabinet-approved Transport Infrastructure Plan and Cycling and Multi-Use Trail Network Strategy<sup>1</sup> indicates that South West Exeter remains a priority for future multi-modal infrastructure investment.

If there are specific proposals that CWEST wish the County Council to consider in respect of walking and cycling routes, bus improvements and any other suggestions then we would be happy to consider them. The County Council has previously liaised with the Alphington Village Forum to develop proposals to improve the pedestrian environment through the village. There is nevertheless a limit to what financial contributions can reasonably be sought through the planning process.

The County Council disagrees with a number of the points about the park and ride, including that the scheme "represents very poor value for money". This remains a priority scheme for the County Council and City Council (it is identified in the emerging Development Delivery Document) as we believe it has a number of economic and social benefits. We also believe that the environmental aspects of the scheme can be positively addressed. We will be submitting a planning application later this year and as part of this process, there will be opportunities for people to learn more about the scheme and share their views.

### **An agreed starting point for discussion**

It is recognised that a step change in sustainable travel is needed in order to accommodate the growth planned in Exeter and its environs and the County Council agrees with a number of the statements in your letter.

There are synergies with what CWEST is seeking and what the County Council is planning - the city has an excellent record for numbers of people walking to work (4<sup>th</sup> highest local authority nationally) and it has expanded its cycle network substantially over the past 10 years, following the Cycle Demonstration Towns project, which has seen significant growth in cycling. This investment is set to continue. The city is well provided for in public transport terms with a comprehensive bus network and 8 rail stations and 5 lines passing through the city. The bus and rail network will be expanded to support future

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.devon.gov.uk/loadtrimdocument?url=&filename=PTE/15/22.CMR&rn=15/WD132&dg=Public>

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growth. Stagecoach run three Park and Ride sites commercially, which is indicative of the success this is having in reducing the numbers of cars driving into the city centre. The strategies that have been developed offer a range of transport solutions, recognising that not all people will be able to cycle, catch a train or have access to a car - there are nevertheless financial constraints that we need to work within, which limits what may be achievable in the short to medium term.

### **A way forward**

Following the City Council's Community Scrutiny Committee, I understand that the City Council is exploring setting up a Transport Strategy Working Group, which would involve DCC and ECC officers and representatives from Stagecoach and First Great Western. This would seem like an appropriate forum to enable continued dialogue with Councillors and local groups interested in transport.

I trust that this is a helpful response.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment