

# Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter



## Foreword by Portfolio Holder for City Development and Planning, Exeter City Council

As Exeter's Portfolio Holder for City Development and Planning, I am delighted to introduce the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter.

This Charter sets out Exeter City Council's commitment to achieve the highest design, sustainability and placemaking standards for all new developments. It is vital to our efforts to deliver Exeter's ambitious vision to be an inclusive, healthy and sustainable city by 2040.

Exeter has seen significant growth over recent years and has an exciting future ahead as one of the UK's fastest-growing cities. We aim to harness this growth to create a world-class city that meets the needs of all current and future residents.

That is why we have established the Exeter Design Quality Partnership. This brings together the City Council, developers, community groups and other stakeholders to align our goals through collaboration, shared learning and constructive feedback.

The Charter asks that everyone involved in shaping Exeter's built environment join us in striving for design excellence. This means embracing sustainability, community wellbeing, local context, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

By signing up to the Charter and participating actively in the Partnership, you can demonstrate your dedication to realising Exeter's vision. Together, we can deliver developments that make people proud to call Exeter home. I invite you to work with us to build on the strengths of our historic city while creating inclusive, zero-carbon places fit for the future. Exeter's continued prosperity depends on sustainable, resilient and human-scale growth. Let's come together with integrity, creativity and determination to set new standards for planning and placemaking. I look forward to your involvement in this shared endeavour for Exeter.



**Cllr Phil Bialyk**  
Portfolio Holder for City Development and Planning  
Exeter City Council

## Introduction to the Exeter Design Quality Partnership

Exeter City Council expects all new developments to be of the highest quality and sustainability. The Exeter Design Quality Partnership (EDQP) has been established by the City Council to raise the standards of design, sustainability, and placemaking for new developments in Exeter.

The key aims of the EDQP are:

- 1 To bring together everyone involved in shaping the future of the city, including the City Council, Devon County Council, landowners, developers, designers, local communities, and government agencies.**
- 2 To provide leadership, tools and processes to drive continuous improvements in the quality of new developments.**
- 3 To promote a culture that values high-quality, sustainable design and responds to local context.**
- 4 To equip people with the skills, mindset and latest thinking to influence planning and placemaking positively.**
- 5 To champion design excellence through early engagement, design review, and sharing best practices.**
- 6 To forge open and productive relationships between stakeholders based on trust and accountability.**
- 7 To provide clarity, consistency and transparency in planning policies, guidance and decision-making.**
- 8 To create beautiful places where communities can flourish, and businesses can prosper.**

Through its activities, the EDQP aims to ensure new developments in Exeter support its ambitious vision to be inclusive, healthy and sustainable. The Partnership provides mechanisms for joint problem-solving, collective learning, and sharing of expertise.

Exeter City Council has prepared this Charter with the help of Design West. The Charter sets out the City Council's commitment to work collaboratively with all those delivering developments in Exeter as part of the EDQP. By signing up for the Charter, all parties can demonstrate their commitment to delivering Exeter's ambitious Vision 2040.

## The Exeter Vision 2040

Exeter has an ambitious vision for the next 20 years, which can be summarised in a single sentence:

“By the time they are an adult, a child born in Exeter today will live in a city that is inclusive, healthy, and sustainable - a city where the opportunities and benefits of prosperity are shared, and all citizens are able to participate fully in the city’s, economic, social, cultural and civic life.”

The vision has seven key outcomes:

- 1 An innovative and analytical city**
- 2 A healthy and inclusive city**
- 3 The most active city in the UK**
- 4 Accessible world-class education**
- 5 A liveable and connected city**
- 6 A leading sustainable city**
- 7 A city of culture**

The City Council will use these outcomes to harness investment in our city. They map to the key policies and development sites in the emerging Exeter Plan, providing a framework for considering large-scale and complex developments and how they impact Exeter’s success.

## Liveable Exeter

In 2019, the City Council launched Liveable Exeter, to build at least 12,000 new homes on brownfield land, strengthen existing communities and create eight new neighbourhoods in sustainable locations.

Liveable Exeter is an ambitious initiative that will curate sustainable development, regenerating previously developed land in the city. It is the brilliant alternative to building on our precious green spaces and will protect the things which make Exeter special, including the green hills which surround the city and our rich cultural heritage.

Liveable Exeter is enabling the City Council to work collaboratively with the development industry, guided by seven principles. These principles are embedded in the emerging Exeter Plan and seek to ensure that the most significant developments are of the highest quality. The EDQP will deliver on these Liveable Exeter principles by providing design and placemaking advice.

The Liveable Exeter Principles are tools to contribute to delivering the outcomes of the Exeter Vision 2040. The 7 themes capture the outcomes Exeter is seeking to achieve.

## Memorable places

Exeter has strengthened its relationship with key features that define the image of the city including the River Exe, the City Centre and the surrounding hills.

## Outstanding quality

Exeter has high-quality and net zero carbon living, working, learning, leisure, cultural and historic environments which help to attract top businesses and the best talent.

## Welcoming neighbourhoods

Exeter is made up of a network of compact and well-connected neighbourhoods where people can access day to day services such as care, schools, work and social spaces by walking and cycling.



## Liveable buildings

Exeter's new and upgraded buildings contribute to an attractive city and are well-designed spaces where people enjoy spending time.

## Connected culture

Exeter has a diverse and accessible cultural offering, connecting our world leading climate science, arts and literature, heritage, learning and innovation.

## Spaces for people and wildlife

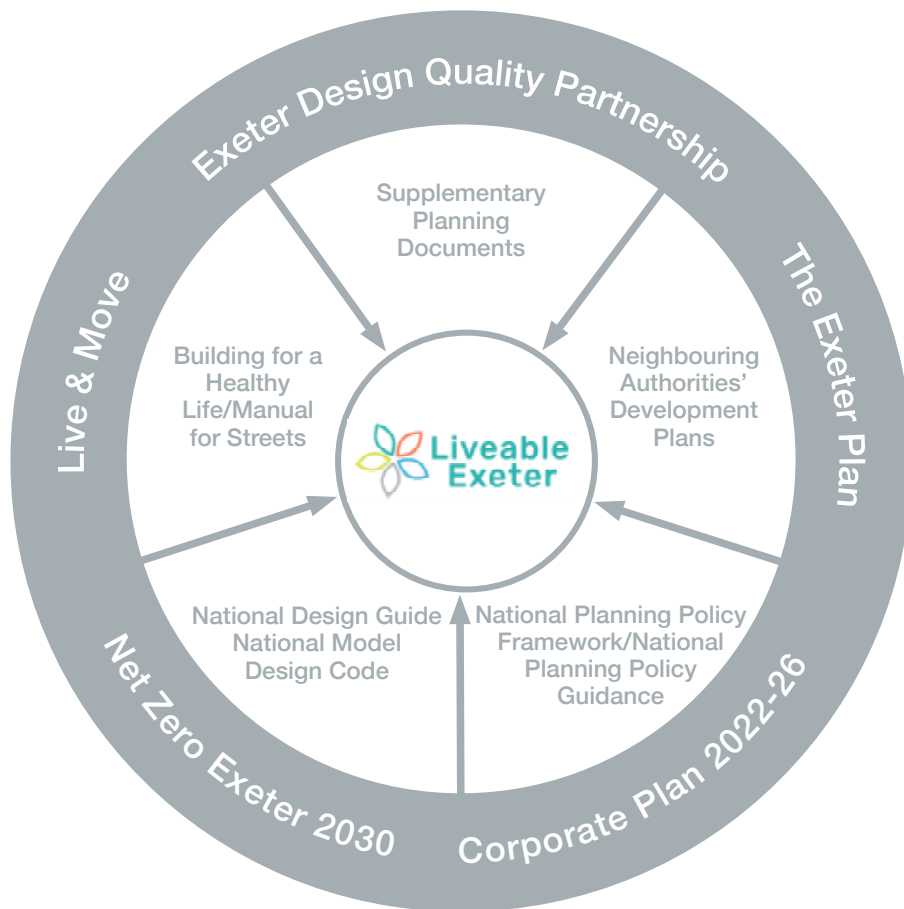
Exeter's urban and natural spaces are attractive and well-connected environments well used for recreation, active travel and for supporting wildlife.

## Active streets

Exeter has transformed into a city with high-quality streets where active travel, public transport and shared mobility are the natural and most convenient choice for most journeys.

## National and Local Placemaking

This Charter reflects the City Council's corporate priorities and recognises other influences on planning and placemaking.



## Aim of the Charter

By using this Charter, Exeter City Council will champion collaborative, design-led planning and placemaking processes, bringing together all contributors to help achieve Exeter's Vision 2040.

We will provide the leadership, resources, and tools to drive continuous improvements. Our goal is to exceed national standards and match the best internationally.

By harnessing our collective creativity, knowledge and commitment, we can deliver positive change. We aim to:

- 1 **Value the social, economic and environmental outcomes of new development.**
- 2 **Ensure that new development is viable and deliverable.**
- 3 **Increase the skills, knowledge and experience of people involved in planning**
- 4 **Embed design review, measurement and sharing of lessons learned.**
- 5 **Build strong and effective working relationships with key stakeholders.**
- 6 **Provide clarity and certainty through transparent policies and processes.**
- 7 **Respond flexibly and proportionately to each unique context.**
- 8 **Promote high quality development and placemaking.**

**We invite you to collaborate with us on this journey. Together, we can ensure Exeter grows in line with its bold vision for an inclusive, healthy and sustainable future.**

## Shared Commitments

The City Council invites all those involved in shaping the future of Exeter to join us in a shared commitment to deliver exceptional quality outcomes.

Together, we can build consensus around the value of high-quality design, sustainability and community wellbeing. By signing this Charter, stakeholders demonstrate their dedication to realising Exeter's vision.

We ask that you embrace the following principles:

- 1 Participate fully and positively in pre-application discussions and design reviews. This will identify improvements early on.**
- 2 Undertake early and meaningful engagement with local communities most impacted by new developments.**
- 3 Contribute your insights through the Developer's Forum and other engagement opportunities. Help enhance processes.**
- 4 Collaborate openly with integrity, respect and accountability. Aim to resolve issues and align priorities.**
- 5 Commit to continuous learning and improvement. Attend training and share your knowledge.**
- 6 Employ context-driven design that responds to local needs and character. Seek innovative and sustainable solutions.**
- 7 Deliver developments that create not just buildings but inclusive, healthy communities.**
- 8 Measure outcomes robustly to understand impacts and identify where more can be achieved.**

By working together in this way, we can deliver Exeter's growth in line with its ambitious vision. Our shared commitments will raise the bar for design quality, sustainability and community wellbeing.

## A High-Quality Planning Service

Exeter City Council is committed to delivering a high-quality planning service and create thriving communities.

We will provide a skilled, multidisciplinary team with the resources to manage development proposals collaboratively.

Where appropriate for major developments, we will establish Planning Performance Agreements. These provide continuity through dedicated points of contact and alignment on priorities.

We offer a Pre-Application Advice Service at the earliest stages to resolve issues proactively. Charges will support the delivery of expert guidance tailored to each project.

In turn, we expect applicants to engage with us early with comprehensive information so we can validate proposals efficiently. Participating constructively in design review will lead to higher quality outcomes.

Enhanced communication and training will empower all parties to contribute effectively:

- 1 We will keep applicants updated regularly to build mutual understanding.**
- 2 Workshops will align knowledge and expectations.**
- 3 Sharing lessons learned from completed schemes will drive continuous improvements.**

Our aim is to build positive working relationships based on transparency and accountability. By working together, we can ensure the planning process delivers sustainable growth and enables thriving communities.

## Exeter Design Quality Partnership Tools

Exeter City Council is committed to embedding world-class design, sustainability, and placemaking standards. We are enhancing our toolkit to support this through the Exeter Design Quality Partnership.

Our core tools include:

### Design Review Panel

We have partnered with Design West to provide an independent Design Review Panel. Their experts will give impartial guidance on proposals to drive continuous improvements. Early design review will help applicants refine plans and secure approvals.

### Planning Performance Agreements

Bespoke PPAs provide dedicated resources and project management for major developments. This enables issues to be addressed proactively for timely, high-quality outcomes.

### Pre-Application Advice

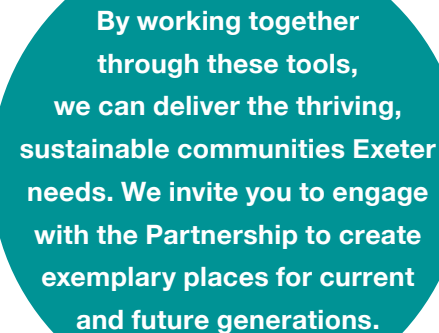
Our multidisciplinary team offers tailored guidance at the crucial early stages. We advise on policy, validate proposals, and identify solutions to issues.

### Developer's Forum

This new community of practice will foster open dialogue between stakeholders to raise standards jointly. Share your insights and help shape it.

### Measuring Outcomes

We are developing a framework to evaluate completed schemes against social, economic and environmental metrics. This will inform policy reviews and training.



**By working together  
through these tools,  
we can deliver the thriving,  
sustainable communities Exeter  
needs. We invite you to engage  
with the Partnership to create  
exemplary places for current  
and future generations.**



## Design Review Panel

Exeter City Council has partnered with Design West to provide an independent Design Review Panel (DRP) for the city. This panel of experts will offer impartial guidance to enhance design quality and sustainability.

The National Planning Policy Framework advocates design review for significant proposals. We will refer schemes to the DRP during pre-application and before submission. This frontloads improvements for timely approvals.

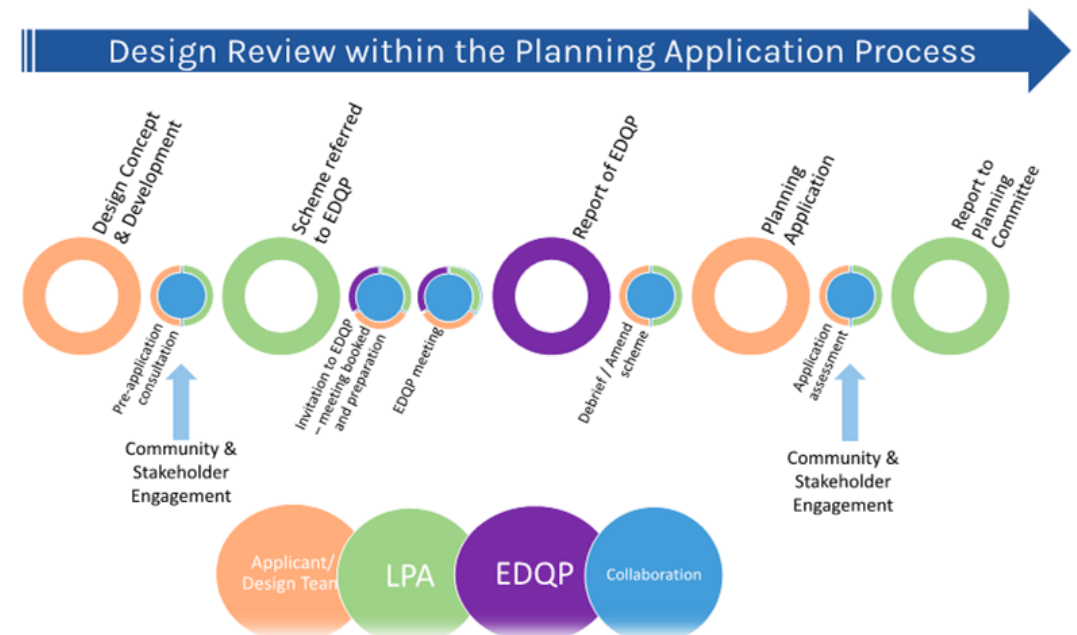
For major developments, undertaking an early-stage design review is highly recommended. The DRP will also advise on policy frameworks.

The DRP delivers many benefits:

- 1 **Access to seasoned professionals, including architects, urban designers, sustainability experts and community representatives.**
- 2 **Independent, objective advice drawing on extensive experience.**
- 3 **Embedding national best practices while responding to Exeter's unique context.**
- 4 **Enhanced skills, capacity and learning across sectors on design, coding and masterplanning.**
- 5 **A coordinated approach across Exeter's boundaries by collaborating with neighbours.**

Design review is a proven way to achieve excellence. Constructive feedback at the right time can elevate proposals and create exemplary places. We encourage all stakeholders to engage with the panel to enrich schemes.

**Together, we can ensure development in Exeter supports its vision for an inclusive, healthy and sustainable future through highly contextual and human-centred design.**



## Planning Performance Agreements

For major or complex developments in Exeter, we recommend entering into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). This provides a framework for collaborative working between developers and Exeter City Council. A PPA enables dedicated resources and bespoke timescales to manage the planning process from pre-application to post-decision stages efficiently. It is a proactive project management tool tailored to your development.

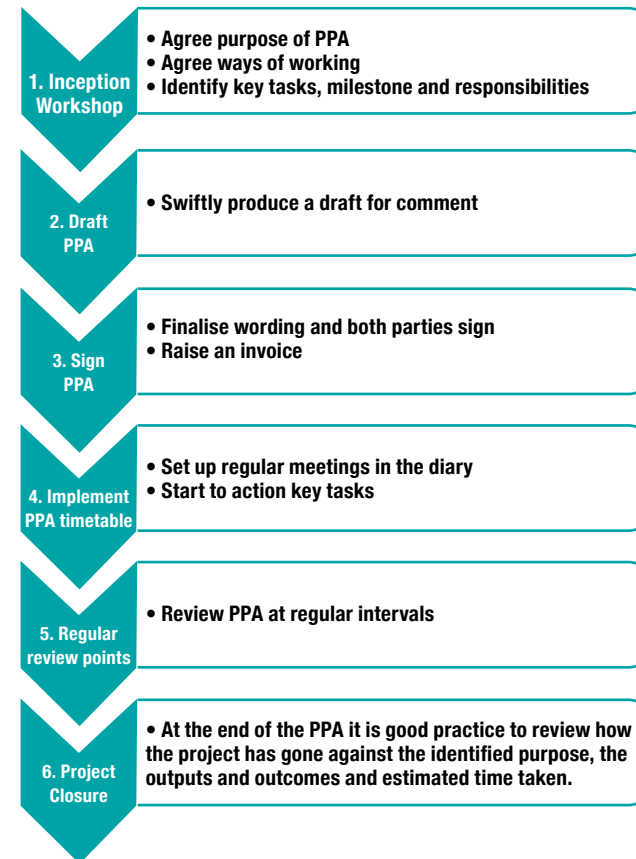
Benefits of PPAs include:

- 1 **Enhanced Partnership between you, the Council, and stakeholders**
- 2 **Continuity through named points of contact**
- 3 **Certainty through aligned expectations and milestones**
- 4 **Issues identified and addressed early to prevent delays**
- 5 **A shared vision to guide the proposal to approval**
- 6 **Transparency through regular monitoring and communication**
- 7 **The right specialist input secured when needed**
- 8 **Design review embedded at the optimal stages**
- 9 **Improved quality of final proposals**
- 10 **Quicker planning determination**

PPAs reflect our commitment to work positively, share information, consult effectively, and be accountable. We will collaborate to achieve the best outcome for Exeter.

If you are bringing forward a major development, we encourage discussing a PPA with us early on. This will align priorities from the outset to deliver thriving places for the community.

The process we will follow is as follows:



Dedicating resources to a project through a PPA diverts resources from other work. We will look to backfill to ensure our services can be delivered to a high standard. We expect the applicant to cover the cost of this backfill and any expenses incurred for the appointment of specialist support (e.g., viability consultants).

## Pre-application Advice Service

Early engagement between developers and Exeter City Council is vital for achieving high-quality, sustainable developments. Our Pre-Application Advice Service enables collaborative working right from the start.

We provide expert guidance tailored to your project to identify issues, find solutions, and align proposals with planning policies and community needs. This reduces risk, creates certainty, and speeds up decision-making.

Our multidisciplinary team helps you navigate requirements and unlock innovative ideas. We offer three flexible levels of service:

### Scoping

**Explore feasibility and determine the right pathway**

### Standard

**Comprehensive guidance through meetings and design review**

### Planning Performance Agreement

**Bespoke service for complex proposals**

The benefits for you include:

- 1 Resolving issues early to avoid later delays**
- 2 Better chance of a successful outcome**
- 3 Reduced costs from needing less redesign**
- 4 Shorter application timeframes**
- 5 Greater confidence and clarity**
- 6 An independent perspective to improve quality**

We build positive relationships based on transparency, accountability and mutual understanding. Our aim is to help you submit a robust application.

**Engage with us as early as possible. We want to collaborate with you to shape Exeter's future growth through developments that set the highest standards for design, sustainability and community wellbeing.**

## Developer's Forum

Exeter City Council is establishing an open and collaborative Developer's Forum to foster productive working relationships between the Council, developers, and other stakeholders.

The Forum provides a platform to align goals, jointly solve problems, share best practices, and drive improvements early in the development process. Together, we can deliver high-quality, sustainable developments for Exeter. We warmly invite all those involved in shaping Exeter's built environment to participate.

The Forum is an opportunity to:

- 1 Connect with fellow developers, the Council team, designers, and other professionals**
- 2 Contribute your insights to influence policies and processes**
- 3 Learn from case studies and training sessions**
- 4 Give feedback to enhance the planning system**
- 5 Collaborate on innovative solutions to shared challenges**

By coming together regularly, we can build a mutual understanding of needs and priorities. Harnessing our collective expertise will lead to better outcomes.

The Forum complements formal planning procedures and design reviews. It enables open, constructive discussions on emerging issues and what we can achieve by working together.

Exeter City Council is committed to co-designing the Forum with stakeholders to meet all our needs. We will create a schedule of meetings, events and networking opportunities that add value.

**Help us shape the Forum by signing up and sharing your ideas.**

**This is a call to action for everyone who wants to create places that future generations will be proud to call home.**

## Measuring Outcomes

To build thriving, sustainable communities in Exeter, we must understand the true impact of developments. Exeter City Council is committed to robust monitoring and evaluation of completed schemes.

We will develop a comprehensive framework of Key Performance Indicators aligned to the seven Exeter 2040 Vision outcomes. This will allow us to gauge success across social, economic and environmental factors and identify where improvements can be made.

Evaluations will draw on diverse data sources and methods. We will undertake site visits, surveys, interviews, and analysis of urban performance metrics. The findings will feed into a live case study archive to share lessons learned.

Monitoring outcomes is crucial for driving continuous improvement. It will help us refine policies, processes and training to positively influence placemaking. We aim to create a culture of openness about what works well and where more can be done.

Developers are encouraged to collect and share data to support evaluations of their schemes. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the positive impact of developments and identify innovations for wider replication.

By measuring outcomes collectively, we can ensure Exeter grows in line with its ambitious vision and creates places where current and future generations thrive. Evaluations will give us the insights needed to keep raising the bar for quality and sustainability.

## Next steps for the Charter

This Charter is intended as a 'living document' that will evolve over time to meet the needs of Exeter. Exeter City Council and Design West are committed to an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to refine and improve the Charter.

We invite you to engage with us to help shape the future direction of the Charter. Your feedback will inform updates and ensure the Charter remains relevant, achieves its aims, and drives continuous improvement in design quality and placemaking.

Together, we want to build momentum and enthusiasm for the aspirations set out in the Charter. We aim to foster an open culture of collaboration between all parties involved in delivering high-quality, sustainable developments in Exeter.

The Charter will be monitored and reviewed regularly. We will evaluate its effectiveness, identify where more work is needed, and make changes accordingly. Reviews will draw on lessons learned from completed developments to understand what works well and where improvements can be made.

**This is an exciting opportunity for everyone who cares about Exeter's future. We look forward to working with you to ensure the planning process delivers thriving, healthy and socially active communities that meet the needs of current and future generations.**

# Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter



EXETER  
LIVE BETTER