

a **TOOLKIT**
for **FUTURE**
PLACEMAKING
in **EXETER**



Actions for Refining the Toolkit post RIBA competition
February 2020

How Can We Deliver High Density, Car Free, Sustainable Neighbourhoods in Exeter?

"We need to deliver a different type of housing in the future, higher density, and by doing so we need to address the quality of the environment, which makes it more acceptable for high density developments."

"My job is to help Exeter become a stronger city. It's what we do with others that makes a great place, and so when you get collaboration, that's where the magic happens."

- Karime Hassan, CEO, Exeter City Council



There is a challenge emerging to define the journey to the future we want. An additional challenge is in recognising that how we frame the future affects our ability to achieve it. Acknowledging that what we choose to observe influences the outcomes.

Take for example previous visions of the future. We can see how ideological aspirations of the 50s & 60s have led to physical realities in our cities and towns, and in our behaviours. The issues we face today as a consequence largely relate to car ownership and use. But utopian visions alone rarely deliver all that they promised.

And so we find ourselves in Exeter looking to the future but faced with the present and asking one of two things:

- Whatever our hope for the future, how can we make positive progress with the current systems and processes that are in place?
- and - If we do get there, what if the future vision doesn't deliver what it promised?

"We'd like you not to try and constrain your suggestions and ideas based on current planning policy or other frameworks that may exist. Those have all been developed in a non-net-zero scenario. If we're going to achieve net zero we will need new solutions and new ideas"

(Devon Net Zero Task Force)

Hilton Barnfield, with David Hawes, tackled their commission to develop design principles for a sustainable, high-density, and car-free city centre in Exeter with the new perspectives and future thinking that the programme sought to unlock. In a very compressed and demanding timeframe, they unpacked their brief and proposed a compelling analysis of the drivers for change in the city, from which they developed a clear and usable toolkit. They showed a real flair for communicating ideas to their stakeholders and were able to secure buy in and build strong relationships with the project partners and the local authorities. A real success metric for the RIBA was whether the strategic thinking we commissioned laid the groundwork for further work - and the team's subsequent work for Exeter City Council and Homes England is a testament to the quality of their initial response.

- Lucy Carmichael, Director of Practice, RIBA

So how are we to change our perspective on the future of Exeter?

Seeing the city as we should in context, distinctive in its past and its function; but at the same time breaking free of existing shackles of poorly performing environments, streets blighted by traffic, diminishing air quality, deteriorating health, slow processes which seemingly prioritise poorly and fail to put people and the environment first.

This Toolkit for Future Placemaking in Exeter will equip people to frame their view of the city's future in a new way. This is a methodology which can be used to shape, and shape again, districts throughout the city to become exceptionally well performing places in their own right, but also contributing uniquely to the city as a whole.

This is not another alternative utopian vision, a snapshot reframing of what the future could be but a long standing set of multi-faceted principles to shape the future of the city.

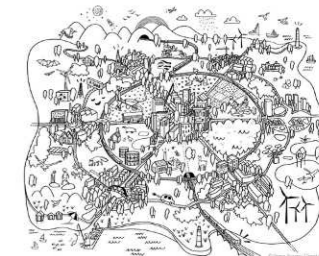


ACTIONS FOR REFINING THE TOOLKIT:

- Align the purposes of the Placemaking Toolkit more transparently with the objectives of the Liveable Exeter agenda.
- Coordinate the approach to framing the future of placemaking with the variety of other manifestos for change emerging from city stakeholders and partners.
- Identify and engage with wider city stakeholders ensuring headline toolkit objectives are a true representation of social, environmental and economic opportunities.

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FUTURE PLACE



The Future Place initiative is the means by which we can develop some of the tools, and provide that framework for developing some really exciting and visionary master plans.

- Ian Collinson, Homes England

Methodology

The Toolkit for Future Placemaking in Exeter should be considered in its entirety as one body of work, made up of several parts or tools for creating future places.



When considered together these tools provide a sequential and hierarchical method for placemaking in the context of Exeter's specific characteristics and with respect to the challenge of creating car-free, sustainable neighbourhoods.

1 **Tool 1:**
The 5 Drivers for Change




Helping to understand what is distinctive about Exeter and build a vision of future places which are distinctively Exeter.


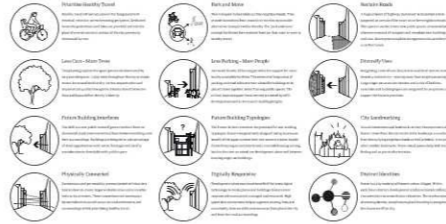
2 **Tool 2:**
One City, Many Parts

Define Districts Score Districts District Frameworks



A tool for recognising the opportunity for contrasting districts of the city which play their individual role in the overall distinctiveness and performance of the city.

3 **Tool 3:**
Ingredients of the Future Place

A pick and mix of design principles which equip users to accelerate design towards the delivery of car free sustainable neighbourhoods in the Exeter context.

4 **Tool 4:**
Pilot Demonstration of Application

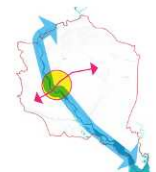
By piloting the Toolkit on the City's primary brownfield opportunity site a demonstrable methodology can be established offering confidence in the Toolkit's application.



Development of Five Drivers from Five Themes



Defined by
Topography &
Landscape



Formed around
the River



Locally defined
social & economic
activity



Trends established
through
industrialisation



Influences on
patterns of
movement

Exeter's past can be distilled into five snapshots through the history and development of the city. Each of these five snapshots contribute to the city's unique character and identity and reference to them can help future development to reinforce this character rather than challenging it. These snapshots through history have

been translated into 'Five Drivers for Future Change' to shape the future of the city and enable the delivery of high density, car free, sustainable neighbourhoods in Exeter.

The Five Drivers for Future Change are principles to frame future social, economic and physical change in the city. These are not

one dimensional solutions but multi faceted principles to shape the future of the city. These five drivers are directly developed from an understanding of the historic influences that have shaped the city. We have illustrated each of the five drivers to demonstrate their application and relevance to the future of the city.

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete"

- Buckminster Fuller: C20th inventor

ACTIONS FOR REFINING THE TOOLKIT:

- Revisit the definition of each of The Five Drivers to ensure a thorough representation of the city's identity.
- Develop the case for each of The Five Drivers through the description of the chronology of development of the city through time.
- Provide more justification and identify existing evidence to confirm or evolve the themes identified as The Five Drivers for Future Change.
- Invite input from a wider stakeholder group on the description of distinctiveness and incorporate findings into the definition of The Five Drivers for Future Change.

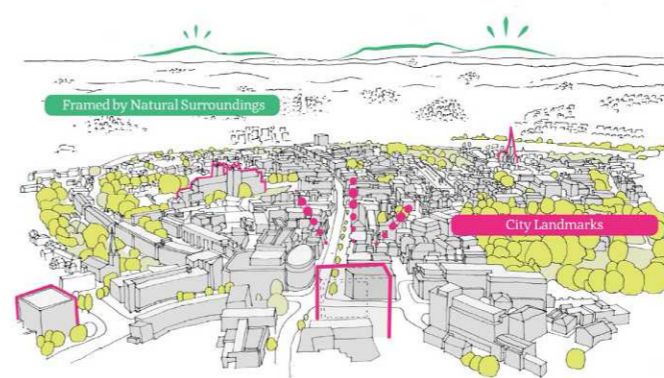


DHUD*

Fertile Surroundings

The first of the Five Drivers is the city's relationship to its Fertile Surroundings. Views from the city to the landscape and from the surrounding countryside to the city's key landmarks are one of Exeter's iconic characteristics. The interdependency between Exeter and its surrounding landscape and rural settlements has driven the shape and character of the city. In order to retain Exeter's identity these relationships must continue to play a part in the future of the city. Connectivity, both physically and digitally, within the city is vital but just as

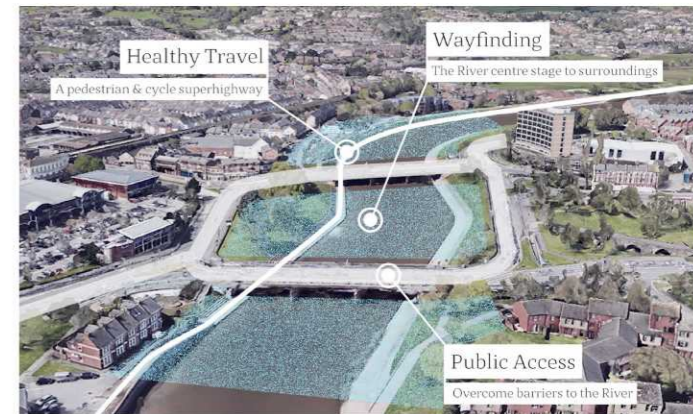
important are the connections beyond the city to the surrounding rural settlements. In the future the city can continue to support its outlying communities through an exchange of information and skills via high speed digital connections.



Turning back to the River

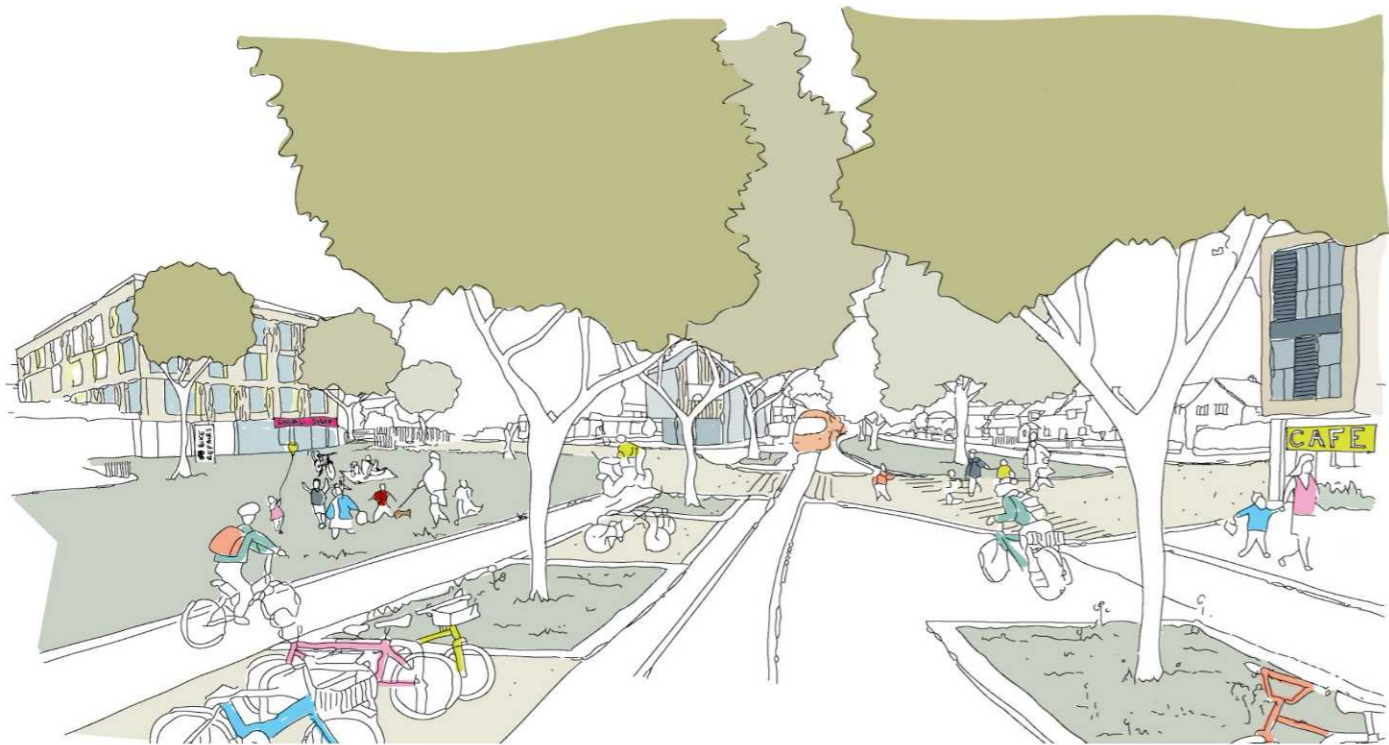
Turning Back to the River is the second driver of future change. The river has played an important role in the history of Exeter but the focus of the river has shifted from a vital trade route to a recreational amenity. The reliance on car travel has further shifted the emphasis away from the river with other routes in and out of the city taking priority. The change in perception of the city when approached along the river is transformational and can once again form a critical gateway to the City in the future. There are currently large areas of the city that fail to take full advantage of

the opportunity to engage with the river and a notable disconnection between the city centre and the quayside. Reorientation of the focus of the city back to the river throws up many opportunities whilst re framing the perception of the approach to the city centre.



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Grey to Green



The third driver for change is the shift from Grey to Green. Exeter's road network has become hugely dominated by motor vehicles and features excessively wide highways. These highways are typically framed by low density housing. Key routes often feature green space but to what purpose? The reality is a highway infrastructure which is becoming renowned for traffic congestion

and poor air quality. By greening the grey we can turn this situation on its head: planting more trees to increase biodiversity and improve air quality; prioritising healthy travel and reclaiming highway real estate to increase housing density and provide the opportunity for a variety of uses on new green corridors throughout the city.

Going Local

Exeter performs third best of cities in the UK for commuting on foot yet physical barriers and poor way-finding limit the full potential of walkable districts. The proliferation of low density neighbourhoods in the city fails to create the critical mass to support suitable amenities and results in large areas with poor connectivity both within existing neighbourhoods and onwards to other areas of the city. Going Local will drive the development of improved walkable districts



focussed around vibrant, functional and well connected local centres. Increasing housing density whilst improving connections and way-finding to local centres will allow communities to thrive in well equipped neighbourhoods.



The Compact City

Exeter remains a Compact City, although there is a real threat from low density sprawl and single use zoned developments. Traffic congestion, air quality, and activity in the public realm are all problems caused by high

levels of commuting by car both to and from the city from one of the largest travel to work areas in the UK. The location and density of employment in consolidated locations around the city exacerbates these problems.



In order to re frame the future we need to: Diminish uses in single use zone locations. Strategically distribute uses across the City by:

- exploiting existing public transport nodes
- enhancing existing local centres

- creating new local centres
- This will result in diverse and identifiable districts and local centres. In this way, distributed activity and densification across the city will trigger significant improvements in public transport, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

One City Many Parts

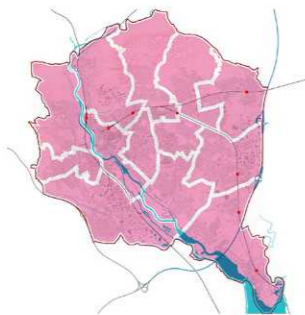
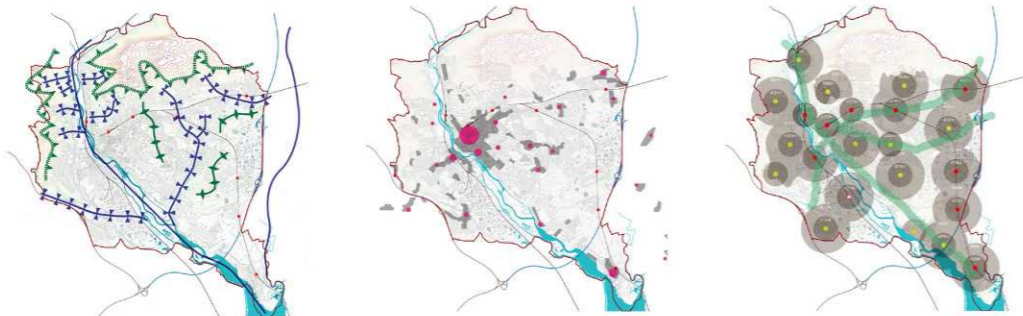
There are a number of layers which contribute to defining recognisable districts in the future:

The topography of the city naturally divides and structures movement across the city.

The Urban Villages work carried out by ECC is now superseded by the Liveable cities work but is none the less relevant in understanding the historic and continuing influence of various village centres and focuses for communities around the city.

There is a body of supporting data and performance indicators, mainly structured according to the city's ward boundaries, which helps highlight distinct differences across the city in things like well-being, levels of physical activity, car ownership, unemployment.

Identifying walkable and cyclable radii from public transport nodes and other local centres, as well as proximity to the main corridors into and out of the city has helped determine the focus and accessibility of future districts.



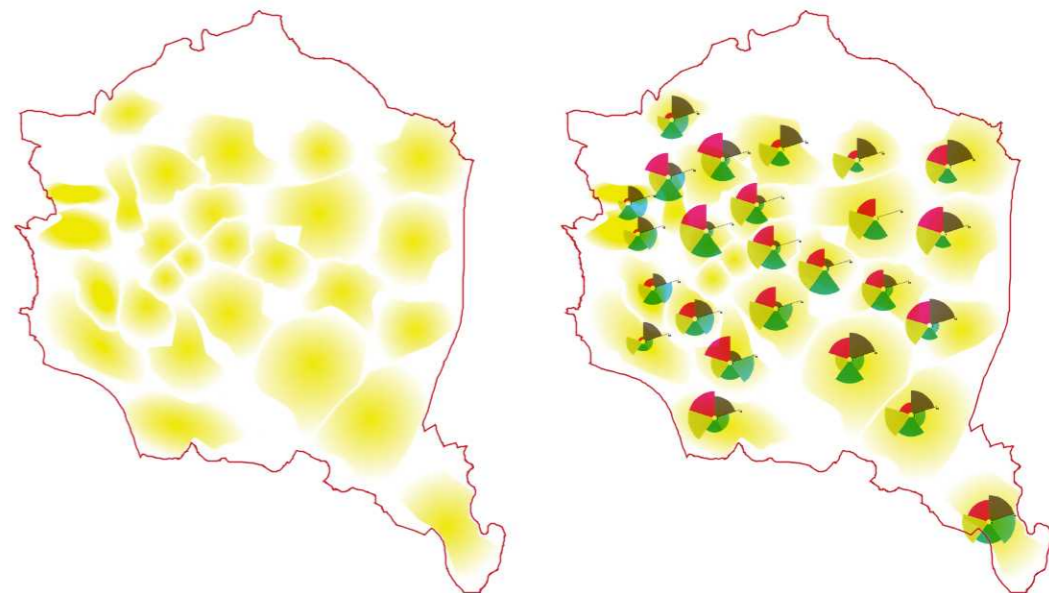
ACTIONS FOR REFINING THE TOOLKIT:

- Revisit all layers which contribute to district identification.
- Engage further with city stakeholders to understand district and neighbourhood formation.
- Compile existing present data layers in a legible and evidenced way.
- Establish a transparent methodology for district definition.
- Check back future district definition with stakeholders.
- Consolidate district definition methodology and results into a comprehensive reporting method.

Reinterpreting this data and historic context has helped to define 25 future city districts. To encourage interrelationships it is important to acknowledge that exact boundaries don't really exist but that future placemaking will be more effective where it relates to addressing the different needs across the city, as opposed to applying generic good practice design criteria across the board.

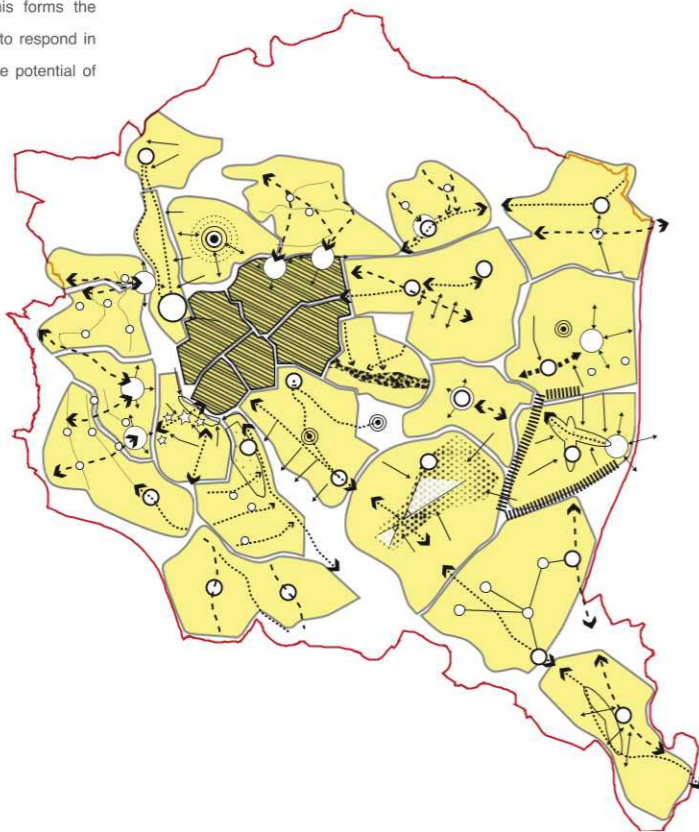
Each district has been subject to a scoring exercise for district; measuring their potential to perform against the Five Drivers for Future Change to arrive at a profile for each district which represents its potential role in the wider city identity.

The city is a body of many parts, each part with its own role to play and just as a body is not all ears, or all legs, so it is with the city, different parts perform individually important roles in the overall identity and function.



High Level Frameworks as the Basis for a Placemaking Strategy

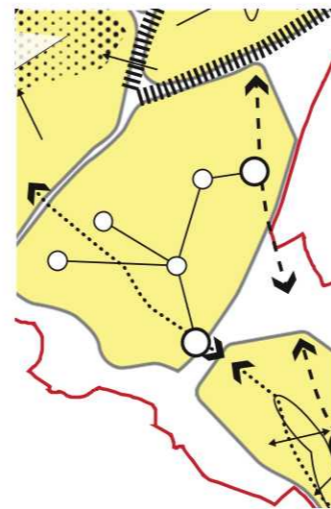
In response to each districts' scoring profile a high level framework diagram has been prepared for each district. This forms the basis by which we might start to respond in placemaking terms to the future potential of each district.



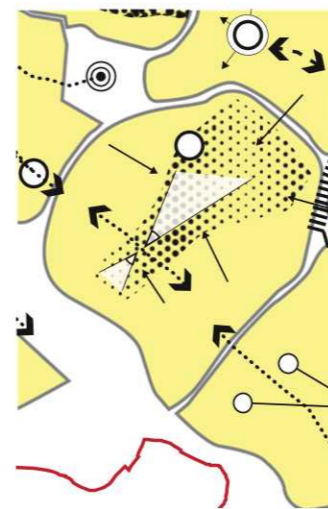
ACTIONS FOR REFINING THE TOOLKIT:

- Provide a transparent methodology for scoring each district.
- Produce a schedule of scores against key criteria for each of the Five Drivers.
- Review framework diagrams for each district in light of wider evidence base review and stakeholder input.
- Revisit districts to refine definitions and eliminate anomalies.
- Produce individual district framework sheets.
- Summarise key placemaking principles for each district framework.

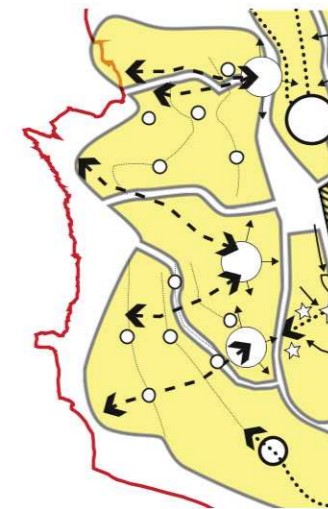
For example the Seabrook and Newcourt area, has the potential to provide much more effective local centres of mixed activity where currently the area is primarily a single use residential zone. The opportunity for this greater mix of activity would be best focussed around several existing focusses of activity, the station, retail on Topsham Road and the school rather than a single larger district centre. As a result a framework of placemaking in this quite large district is a polycentric one.



In Ludwell and Wonford there is a really significant opportunity to build the community's identity around the existing City Farm, managed by Exeter City Council. Intensifying building form, recreation and exploiting healthy green travel along the valley towards the Topsham Road corridor provides the opportunity for a very distinctive district identity and function and represents something of that wider connection and interdependency between the rural and the city.



In contrast, neighbourhoods on slopes to the west of the city are defined much more strongly by the topography with local facilities typically located nearer to Cowley Lane, Buddle Lane and Exwick Lane on lower lying ground, there is a problem of accessibility to local facilities here exacerbated by limited north and south movement. The placemaking strategy here then focuses on improving links and legibility and may include the need for innovative public transport provision of shuttle services or wider provision of e-bikes.



Twelve Ingredients for Future Placemaking



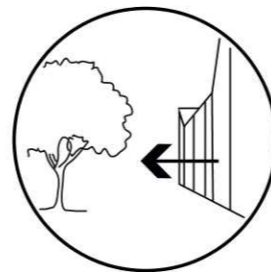
Prioritise Healthy Travel

Healthy travel infrastructure is in the foreground with essential vehicular access becoming peripheral. Dedicated routes for pedestrians and bikes are provided and take the place of arterial routes in and out of the city previously dominated by cars.



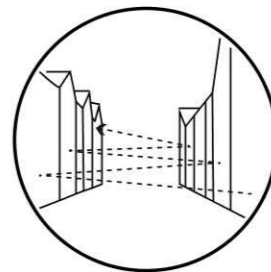
Less Cars - More Trees

Tree planting exploits the space previously dominated by cars providing over 3,000 trees throughout the city on major routes. Increased biodiversity, carbon sequestration and improved air quality through the introduction of extensive flora and fauna define the city's identity.



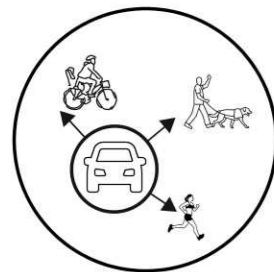
Future Building Interfaces

The shift to a new public realm of green corridors from car dominated roads creates new interfaces between buildings and their surroundings. Buildings are designed to take advantage of these opportunities with active frontages and careful consideration to thresholds with public space.



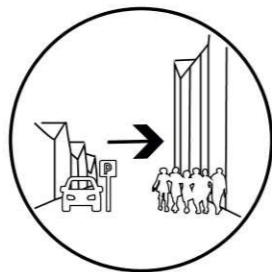
Physically Connected

Connections and permeability are maximised with barriers broken down to create larger walkable areas and accessible links to local centres. These connections are continuous between districts as well as out to rural settlements and surroundings whilst prioritising healthy travel.



Park and Move

New transport hubs enable car free neighbourhoods. They provide transitions from inward car travel to sustainable alternative transport within the city. The 'park and move' concept facilitates the transition from car, bus, train or tram to healthy travel.



Less Parking - More People

Increased density of housing provides the support for more locally accessible facilities. The removal of large areas of parking and road infrastructure allows for buildings to be placed closer together, better framing public spaces. The critical mass to support local centres is created by infill developments and an increase in building heights.



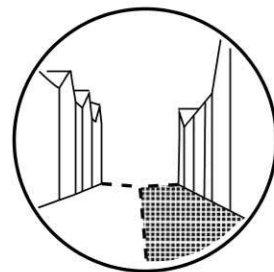
Future Building Typologies

The Future Drivers introduce the potential for new building typologies that are imaginatively designed taking maximum benefit of the opportunities their new context creates: double fronted housing on reclaimed roads; riverside housing turning back to the river; or mixed use development above and between existing single use buildings.



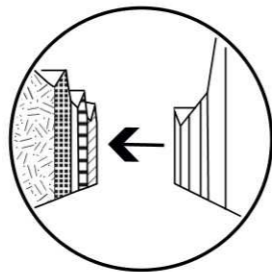
Digitally Responsive

Development takes maximum benefit of the latest digital technology to create places and buildings that are more responsively maintained, managed and resourced. High speed data connections help to augment existing links and sustainably draw on skills and resources throughout the city and from the rural surroundings.



Reclaim Roads

A huge amount of 'highway real estate' is reclaimed and re-purposed as a result of the move to car free neighbourhoods. This space is used to create new public spaces, accommodate alternative means of transport and introduce new buildings and uses. Development exploits the opportunities provided by a car free future.



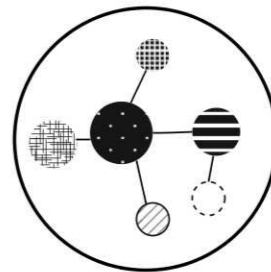
Diversify Uses

Integrating a mix of uses focussed around local centres creates diversity and activity - moving away from single use zoning. Large single use areas are obsolete and a mix of facilities, amenities and building types are integrated to compliment and support the historic provision.



City Landmarking

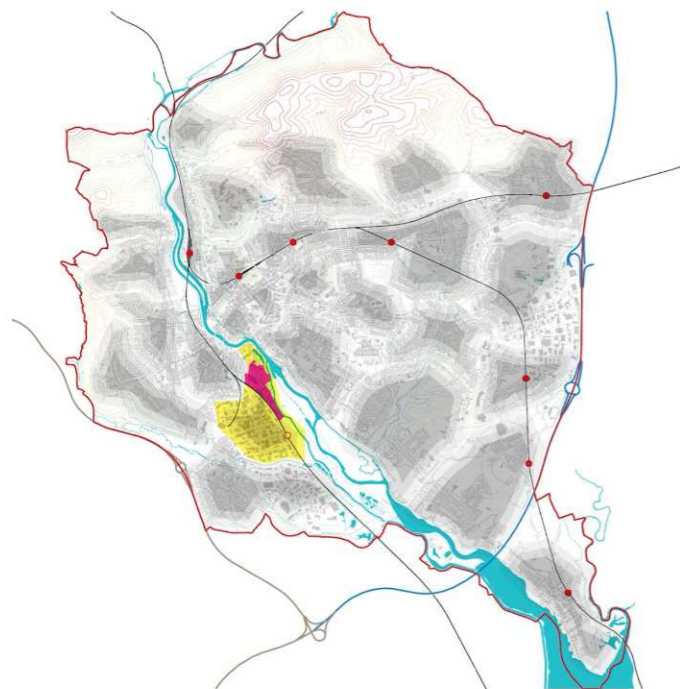
Visual connections and landmarks are key characteristics of Exeter: views from the city centre to the landscape around and from the outlying neighbourhoods to the Cathedral, river and other notable landmarks. These visual queues help with way finding and as points of orientation.



Distinct Identities

Exeter is a city made up of historic urban villages. Within each future district, development reinforces historic defining characteristics to create distinct identities. The reinforcement of existing identity compliments place branding to strengthen the character of the city.

Piloting the Toolkit in the Water Lane Area



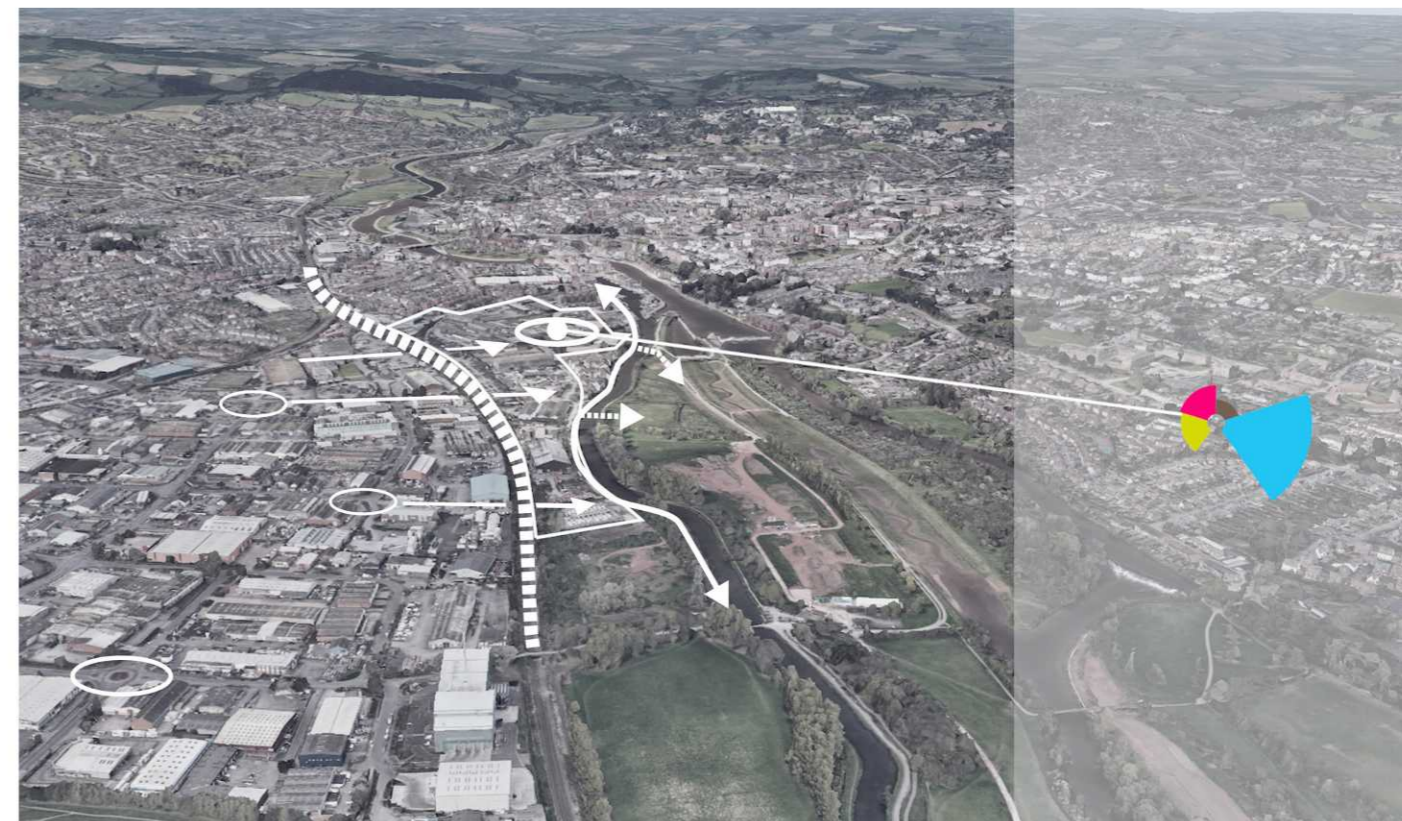
Water Lane is an area to the west of the city centre lying alongside the river. It comprises a variety of disused utility sites (gas and electricity distribution) and some operational industrial uses. The area has been identified by the City Council as a significant opportunity for regeneration, making the most of many of the city's assets in one place. Immediate potential for development lies between the railway and the river and subsequently is very difficult to access by vehicle and its attractiveness to the market has therefore been limited. With a vision for a car-free sustainable neighbourhood there is renewed interest in the Water Lane area as a pilot for

a new approach to development. Bringing forward this area for new investment and unlocking the contribution it can make to the city - measured in a variety of ways.

The opportunity to pilot the Toolkit for Future Placemaking in Exeter at Water Lane begins with consideration of the context. Following the Toolkit methodology, the first consideration is to identify the future city district which the site will form part of. Secondly, identify how this district can perform against the Five Drivers (scoring). Thirdly selection of a variety of ingredients from which to compile the design principles for the area.

ACTIONS FOR REFINING THE TOOLKIT:

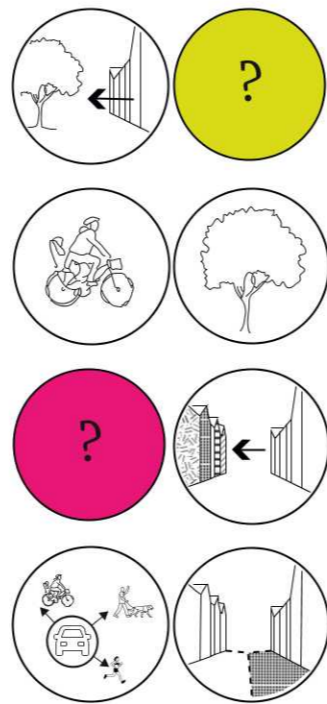
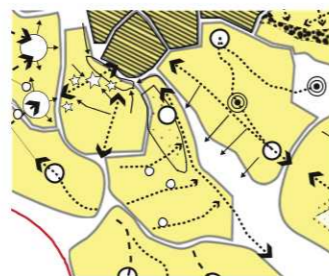
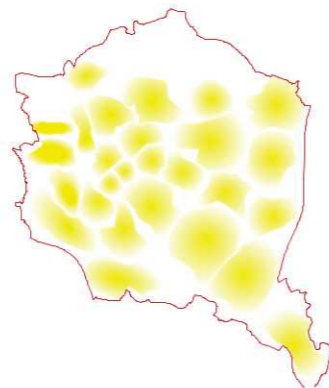
- Identify real world site opportunities for Future Placemaking at Water Lane.
- Consider how the defined Future District relates to the condition of the area.
- Review the role of the site and the high level placemaking framework's usefulness in assessing opportunities.
- Revisit district scoring to test/refine the 5 Drivers criteria.
- Review ingredients for Future Placemaking ensuring full appreciation of site opportunities & constraints.



Learning from the Pilot

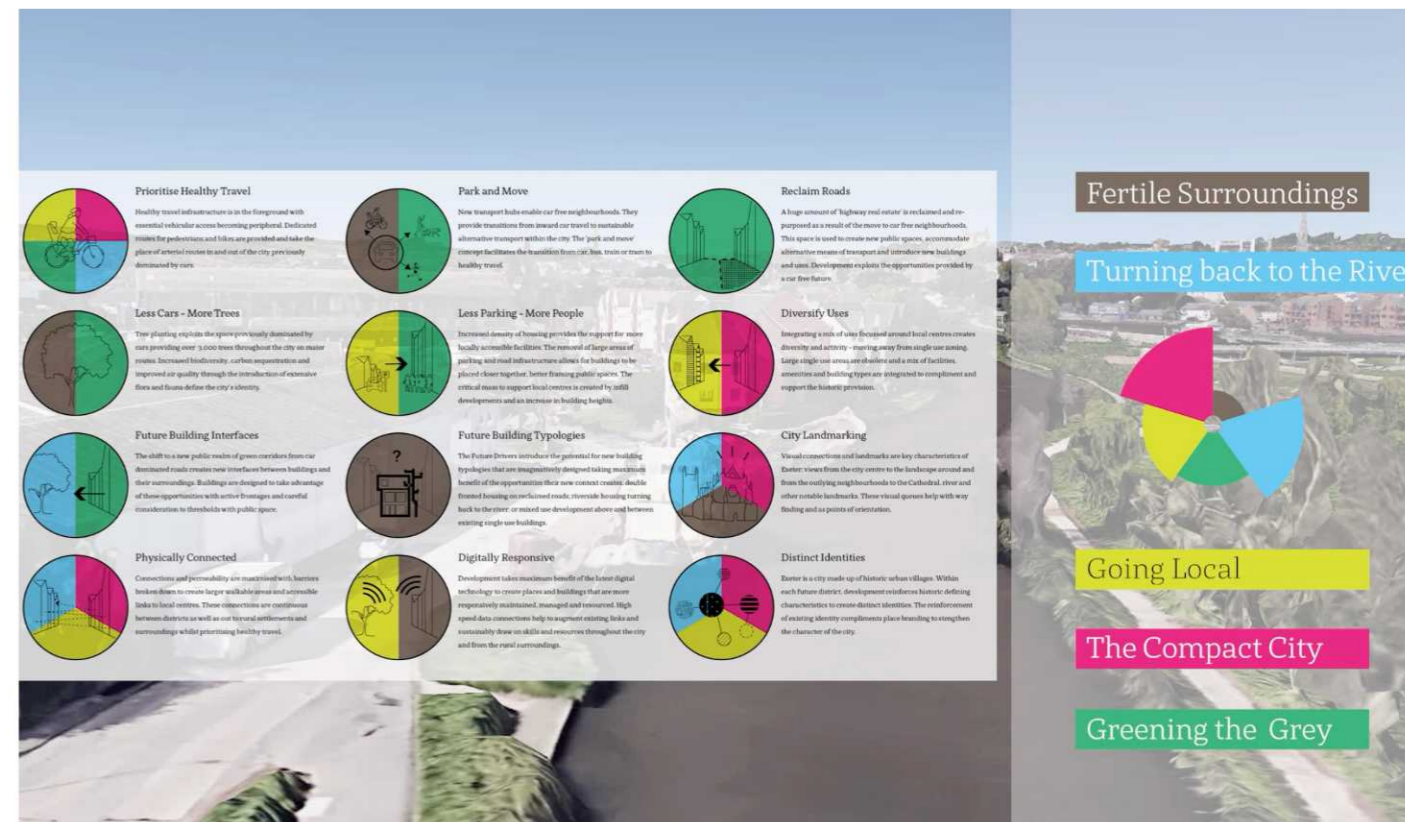
Testing the application of The Toolkit for Future Placemaking on pilot projects in the city allows the opportunity for ongoing development and refinement. This pilot project stage becomes part of an iterative process of testing and refining to maximise the relevance and application of The Toolkit. Whilst this document sets out a methodology for giving further rigour and a broader evidence base to The Toolkit it may remain that some opportunities or misconceptions only become apparent at application.

Through applying The Toolkit to pilot sites in the city questions may arise over the definition of The Five Drivers for Future Change or their description. A particular site might introduce opportunities or future connections between neighbourhoods that had not previously been considered through the formulation of the district definitions and frameworks. Whilst identifying suitable ingredients for a placemaking strategy for a specific site new ingredients might be considered appropriate or others previously considered poignant may appear obsolete. This process of testing and refinement is a positive step in the rigorous development of The Toolkit.

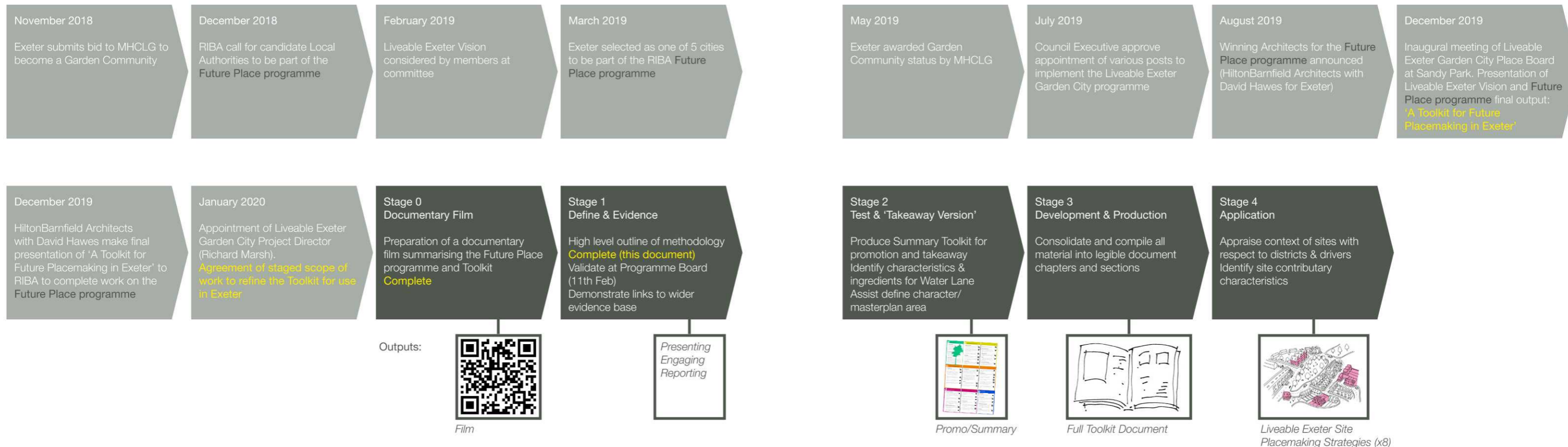


"The 'Toolkit for Future Placemaking' gives the city the opportunity to understand what makes it great, build on its existing strengths and to facilitate the continued sustainable growth of the city; becoming a global exemplar of sustainable and inclusive growth and ensuring that we meet today's challenges with innovative, bespoke and dynamic solutions to deliver a Future Exeter which everyone can be proud of and benefit from."

- Richard Marsh, Project Director - Liveable Exeter, Exeter City Council



Publishing the completed Toolkit



Hilton Barnfield Architects

DHUD*

