
Local growth for local people

The Exeter and East Devon Growth Point's vision is to deliver sustainable economic growth and to help Exeter and East Devon reach their potential.

Economic growth

| 01 Jul 2017

Background

The government introduced Growth Points in 2006 to support local authorities' ambitions for longer-term sustainable growth. The **Exeter and East Devon Growth Point** was established in 2007 by East Devon District, Exeter City and Devon County councils. This helped to forge a long term partnership for growth, bringing together a wide range of organisations from both the public and private sectors.

The Exeter and East Devon Growth Point's vision is to deliver sustainable economic growth and to help Exeter and East Devon reach their potential. This potential is able to build on a number of important local advantages. These include:

- good road transport networks with the M5, the A303 and the A30
- a direct rail link to London in just over 2 hours
- an international airport just outside the city
- being host to one of England's top universities
- the location for a range of businesses including the Met Office, Flybe and precision engineering companies.



Exeter International Airport and the wider growth corridor, looking towards Exeter. © Still Imaging

Planning for growth

Growth Point status enabled the councils and their partners to develop an ambitious vision and attract the funding for delivery. It has led to a development programme worth more than £2bn, of which £90m is public sector funding. This is helping to support the delivery of 20,000 new homes and over 26,000 jobs up to 2026 and includes the development of: the Exeter Science Park, the SkyPark Business Park, the E.ON Energy Centre and an Exeter Gateway Freight Terminal. The programme highlights the important inter-dependency between local economic growth and housing and the opportunity of ensuring that local residents have the ability to access well paid employment opportunities.

Cranbrook

One of the most significant developments in this programme has been the creation of a new town at Cranbrook in East Devon. Originally a proposal within Devon County Council's Structure Plan 1996, and then featured in the East Devon Local Plan of 2006, the vision for Cranbrook was to create:

- a self-sufficient, low carbon new community
- in close proximity to skilled employment opportunities
- which would also encourage people to use sustainable modes of transport and to reduce the need for travel to work by car.

The development of a new free-standing settlement has not occurred in Devon since the Middle Ages. The challenge for planners, architects, urban designers and developers was to build a new town, of up to 6,000 new homes by 2026, that would sustain its community, respond to the needs of a 21st century lifestyle and live

within the setting and landscape of Devon. This was also challenging politically given that the Local Plan attracted around 15,000 objections in 2006, primarily due to the inclusion of the proposed new community.

Development of the first phase began in June 2011. Of the 1,120 new homes 40 per cent was affordable housing, being a mix of shared ownership and rented accommodation; supported by Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) investment of £16m. Cranbrook won two Inside Housing Top 60 Awards in 2015 to celebrate success and innovation in delivering new homes: the winner of winners' award as Best Overall Development, as well as winner of the Affordable Housing category.

Creating sustainable communities

Housing development has been important to support the buoyant economy centred on Exeter and, in particular, to meet housing need and provide housing that was affordable. The South West is the only region with above average house prices but below average wages. The ratio of average house price to average salary in East Devon is 9.5:1 which is amongst the highest in the region and nationally.

Therefore housing affordability is a major pressure for residents and presented an economic risk. The challenge was to provide affordable housing while also creating opportunities for higher paid employment.

The beneficial impact on the local housing market, from the large scale delivery at Cranbrook, is demonstrated by East Devon District Council's housing waiting list. The housing register has reduced from 4,300 to 2,600 households over 5 years and there are no homeless households in temporary accommodation. During 2015/16 East Devon was in the top 5 local authorities nationally for most improved affordability in terms of the change in median house prices and earnings (source: ONS Housing Affordability in England and Wales 1997 – 2016, primarily due to increases in earnings).

A survey of the residents of Cranbrook has taken place annually for the last three years. This has consistently revealed that around 90 per cent of residents have moved from within Devon with around three quarters of the people moving from the Exeter and East Devon areas. This demonstrates the case of providing local homes for local people.

An important requirement for establishing a new town is the provision of supporting social and community infrastructure. Cranbrook now has two schools, a community centre with GP practice, seven shops, public transport provision including a rail station, two play areas and a country park. Cranbrook Town Council was formed in

May 2015; an important milestone in terms of the town helping to govern itself.



Cranbrook Country Park

The early delivery of schools has been Important for the development of Cranbrook. St Martin's Primary school opened in September 2012 at a time when there were less than 30 homes built and occupied. This two form entry school started with less than 40 pupils. Over the next three academic years it grew rapidly and is now full.

The Cranbrook Education Campus provides a further 420 primary places as well as 1,000 secondary places as an all through school. Also included is a nursery meaning that the Campus is one of the few schools in the country that can educate and care for children 2-16 years. The operator (the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust) brings close links with Exeter College and the University of Exeter meaning children have the potential to benefit from a vertically integrated skills model, helping to ensure that they have the best start in life.

Both St Martin's school and the Campus was brought forward and delivered with the support of forward funding from the HCA.

New communities also need transport infrastructure to support local growth. The County Council conceived a clear transport strategy and over £30m has now been invested in infrastructure including a new by-pass, the upgrading of Junction 29 of the M5 and a new cycleway/pedestrian bridge across the motorway. Four rail lines converge on Exeter and the County Council has lead on the delivery of two new rail stations with a third in the pipeline. This forms an important part of the overall sustainable development strategy for the area.

All these elements are important to supporting the development of a new communities and to provide a sense of identity, including the significant role of social media and the 'Belonging to Cranbrook' Facebook page. The latest residents' survey reveals that 85 per cent of residents would recommend Cranbrook as a place to live and 87 per cent get on well with the people they meet.

Shaping local economic growth

The Exeter and East Devon Growth Point has a clear vision to support the existing economy and meet the housing needs of its residents. The intention is to shape a higher-value economy that responds to future economic shifts while providing for the housing needs of residents and building sustainable communities.

At the same time the local economy continues to attract inward investment from businesses big and small in a range of sectors, including: science, technology and maths; retail; construction; green technology; manufacturing; aviation; engineering and power generation.

Future growth is taking place now and being planned on key strategic employment sites. These include the Exeter Science Park with 18 companies already onsite; with more intended through the delivery of 50,000 sq. feet across three buildings to provide grow-on space for science and technology companies. SkyPark has 1.4 million sq. feet of office and industrial/manufacturing space. Across the road a new logistics park is under development with a Lidl regional distribution centre on site and 280 jobs expected during 2017. The potential is for these three sites to deliver around 10,000 jobs to support the local economy.



A further distinctive feature of the growth programme has been the roll out of decentralised energy networks. The Cranbrook and Skypark developments are served by a district heating network, part of a £30m investment by E.ON. A second network is currently being rolled out in the Monkerton area of Exeter with plans for two more networks in the city centre and South West Exeter areas. These will harness a range of energy sources including biomass, solar thermal and energy from waste.

An Enterprise Zone designation covering the Science Park and SkyPark went live in April 2017. This is intended to accelerate the delivery of new commercial development and the designation extends to include Cranbrook town centre. Achieving a town centre fit for the 21st century is one of the defining challenges for the town moving forward. The Enterprise Zone designation will help to ensure new employment creation keeps pace with the delivery of new homes in the area.

Partnership for growth

The main public and private sector partners in the area have brought together through a Growth Board that has met quarterly for the last 10 years. The focus has been on identifying barriers to the delivery of growth and coming forward with practical solutions. Future growth is being developed with the recent establishment of the Greater Exeter Growth and Development Board. This includes the local authority areas of Exeter City, East Devon, Teignbridge and Mid Devon district councils alongside the County Council.

These councils are working to develop a Greater Exeter Strategic Plan which will plan for future growth across a larger sub-regional area which reflects the operation of local labour and housing markets. This is looking forward to 2040 and will include identifying the next generation of strategic development sites.

Critical factors that contributed to success

- Good transport infrastructure and location with this enhanced where needed
- A self-awareness of local assets that provide a focus to nurture and promote a future higher-value economy
- The ability to work across local authority boundaries and to work through the opposition that growth throws up
- Strong political and managerial leadership and relationships that commit to working to common objectives and priorities
- Financial commitment and contributory funding by councils, with this able to leverage resources and commitment from partners such as the Homes and

Communities Agency

- Ability to harness new financial mechanisms and incentives including forward funding and New Homes Bonus
- An infrastructure-led approach, ensuring that the critical infrastructure improvements are delivered at the earliest opportunity
- The recognition that housing and economic growth are inextricably linked
- Ensuring that full consideration and support is given to sustain new communities

Further information

Andy Wood, East of Exeter Project Director, East Devon DC

adwood@eastdevon.gov.uk / 07740 024918

More case studies about Economic growth

Salford: regenerating the inner city

Littlecombe regeneration site

Weston-super-Mare town centre regeneration

[More case studies in this topic](#)

Share this page:



Print this page

Political groups



18 Smith Square, Westminster, London SW1P 3HZ

info@local.gov.uk | **020 7664 3000**