

18th January 2016 (should be 2017)

Richard Short
Assistant Director City Development
Exeter City Council

Dear Mr. Short,

Re: Planning application 16/1616/02.
Bus Station Redevelopment.

As the last element in the whole of the wider Princesshay development, we, the Planning sub-committee of the Exeter Civic Society, find this a disappointment, showing little imagination; and that little has been learned from the process of development of the earlier stages.

Firstly, the leading images of this presentation are of the amphitheatre in a glowing Mediterranean evening light which can easily be characterised as significantly misleading. Exeter is not Provence. Grounded realism needs primary provision to be made for and shown as in the weather conditions we are having now; the grey winter season over the months either side of the solstice.

It follows that a big drive in the development of Princesshay 1 was to provide outside weather cover. Exeter is notable for its rain. This had significant success. There is decent provision of colonnades and canopies. A prime example of its thoughtless omission is with Block A on London Inn Square. Currently, the building to be demolished has a wide canopy, affording good shelter to recoup, having skipped across Paris Street from Next in the lashing rain. This provision is wholly absent from the new proposals and the same applies anywhere else in them. Do developers and architects ever visit, understand or learn about the locations on which they are making these massive changes?

It was also a feature of the work done with Land Securities on Princesshay 1 that the original in-house plans were considered uniform, unimaginative and bland. The result was a competitive situation was set up with three practices involved and a transformed outcome which we now have. Not, of course, perfect; but a great improvement; in particular, architectural interest when looking above street level. This is wholly lacking in these proposals where the small streets are small, smooth sided canyons; holding no interest, to scuttle through as quickly as possible; (except perhaps for the umbrellas around the amphitheatre, in themselves a very questionable aspect. All year round?).

We have a similar view of the Cinema elevation on Paris Street. It is blank, entirely lacking in interest. Again, across Paris Street much work was done to hide the difficult feature of the multi storey car park. (Paul St and its service entrance is a constant stark reminder of how to get it wrong). The blank side of the cinema is weak and thoughtless in comparison.

Given therefore the variety and practicality that was eventually achieved in Princesshay 1 and the modern, innovative and controversial leisure centre, we consider that for the reasons above, these proposals for the last phase fail, should be rejected and substantially reconsidered.

Yours Sincerely

Chris Watson. On behalf of the Planning Sub-Committee of the Exeter Civic Society.

Copy to Case Officer: Howard Smith.