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The Depot Phase 2, Summerland Street. Conversion of ground upper and lower floor units
(Phase 2) to residential Student Accommodation. [21/0458/FUL*](#)

Planning sub-committee of Exeter Civic Society has considered this application and wishes to object.

While Planning Sub-committee of Exeter Civic Society sympathises with MACE on the delays they have experienced and particularly on the current difficulty in achieving the original well-considered concept of street-level shops and services which would enliven Bampfylde Street and Belgrave Road and, in the relevant later application, Summerland Street we cannot accept that this application to convert these upper ground floor and lower ground floor units of Phase 2 to student accommodation should be approved.

During this last year and more it is very unlikely that all (or indeed any) marketed shop units would be successfully rented and so the suggestion in Savills' letter of 21 March that efforts of efficient marketing and reduced rents should be replaced by this abrupt and irreversible change cannot be accepted. A much longer period of increasing normality with greater footfall to the completed Leisure Centre St Sidwell's Point, Bus Station and Coach points may well bring the situation back towards the concept of vibrant and active street frontages which was an attractive feature of the original proposal and certainly helped in its Approval and in that of Phase 2 when that site became available. The original proposal raised hope that this sad area of central Exeter could overcome many decades of depression and the addition of Phase 2 neatly rounding off the building and continuing the line of shops (or possibly cafes) into Summerland Street extended that hope.

Planning sub-committee, while understanding the developers' anxiety, considers that their response is premature and will prove unnecessary as Exeter gradually achieves the economic recovery it hopes for.

One other aspect concerns us. In a public location individual student rooms should not be at close pavement level. The architect clearly understood this and it would be unwise to depart from the excellent design for this level, which was carried forward to Phase 2. MACE clearly realise too that the redesign would not provide rooms as safe as they usually offer, and they attempt to mitigate this by 'defensive' railings and planting which would, we fear, be inadequate especially at the point where windows of student rooms would be slightly below pavement level.

We trust that for reasons of loss of active frontages and the vulnerable position of the proposed student accommodation the application will be Refused.

Pamela Wootton

For Planning sub-committee of Exeter Civic Society