

Established 1961
Registered Charity No: 286932



Water Lane DMC
By email.
info@waterlaneexeter.co.uk

30 July 2022.

Dear Water Lane DMC

Water Lane Public Consultation – June 2022.

Exeter Civic Society was pleased to see your recent early consultation seeking people's views about what may be built in the area, and the invitation to attend the exhibition on the Thursday. Although I was not able to attend myself, other committee members were grateful to have the opportunity for detailed discussions with your representatives.

Below is listed our concerns and opportunities for the site, although we have refrained from being too specific at this stage. We intend to hold a meeting/workshop with local organisations, businesses and residents in August to hear about their concerns and ideas, and then to develop proposals to reflect those for the wider area. We will of course share the outcome with you, although I expect they will be similar to what you have already heard.

We recognise your description of the area with abandoned and contaminated sites, and that these pose challenges. But we hope these issues have been taken into account when acquiring land, with values suppressed to reflect the cost of clearing contamination and removing existing buildings. It will be disappointing if in the future you or future applicants cite the cost of preparing the land as a reason for not providing essential facilities to mitigate the impact of development upon any lack of infrastructure, such as schools etc.

The surface electricity sub-station is clearly a major infrastructure, and we appreciate that the cost of removing this may be prohibitive. We expect that you and the site's owners will undertake a risk assessment of the facility to consider any possible danger to neighbouring properties from fire or explosion. If the area is to be a mixed development, we wonder whether buildings for employment may be best located either side of the site to reduce any danger to people's homes.

Taking some of the themes from your presentation, we would like to add the additional comments:

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Transport

- We support the principle of low car ownership, and to review how this may work we have studied the district of Vauban, Freiburg, Germany. The transport arrangements in that area has been described as world leading and it seems to us that the most of principles used there will work at Water Lane.
- We support quiet streets where pedestrians and cyclists have priority, but where cars are not banned.
- Proposals for up to 20 Co-Car is welcome, but we understand there is an age limit of 75 which will restrict users.
- We hope your discussions with Co-cars will result in a good range of vehicles being available at the transport hub to support people's needs, and for larger families.
- We would like to see some parking on the periphery of the site to support people and families who need a car on a day-to-day basis, and for people who need a van or other vehicle to undertake their daily work. Without some car parking such people will be excluded from this type of development.
- There should be some parking for drivers with disabilities adjacent to living accommodation.
- Whilst we support the principle of delivery hubs, we do not think these will work for all people or all deliveries e.g. furniture and white goods.
- Access by vehicles to the new residential streets should be strictly limited to those who are disabled, drop off and pick up, access for maintenance contractors, and visiting healthcare workers. Can there be a controlled visitors parking area?
- The proposals indicate at least one new pedestrian bridge over the canal, and possibly others. Any such bridge(s) will be a great benefit to walkers and cyclists, but need to be positioned high enough above the canal to allow smaller craft through unimpeded – the Friends of the Canal will hopefully have commented further on this issue.
- We accept that reliance upon Stagecoach for an integrated bus service is difficult because they are a private company, not a public bus service. But it is essential that there is an agreement between Stagecoach, the Highway Authority, and developers. The existing Green P&R service provides a good linkage between the area, Marsh Barton, the city centre, and Sowton to support people working and for leisure activity.
- We think it is essential that the second underpass under the rail line at Tan Lane should be opened up to provide improved access to the area for residents,

businesses, and public transport, and future residents of a re-developed Marsh Barton. The new residents of Marsh Barton will need good access to the Riverside Valley Park, the new primary school, and leisure facilities on the canal and river. Secondary age children in the Water Lane area will need good access to secondary schools, either at West Exe or elsewhere.

Facilities

- Whilst the proposals are to develop a new community, we do wonder how many facilities can be successfully incorporated into this relatively small area. A community needs a local shop, pharmacy, hairdressers, post office, greengrocers and perhaps café; although we recognise that a good local shop can provide much of this.
- We hope that proposals will include a canal side link to the new Marsh Barton station for both pedestrians and cyclists. The towpath should be segregated between cycling and walking, with sufficient margin between the path and any new buildings.
- It is good to see proposals for a new school, and this should result in a large green space for the school's playing field. Schools are independent these days and often built to standard government plans, but it would be good to see some enhance facilities provided to support community activity, particularly for children.

Natural environment.

- The area should have adequate green space for the number of expected residents to be able to socialise if homes will be apartments with little outside space.
- Planting at the perimeter of the site to shield the railway should soften that aspect of the development – perhaps this could be achieved on the embankment by working with Network Rail.
- Enhancement of the Exe Valley Park with more trees and social spaces may be possible, but this must be done through consultation to ensure the area maintains its naturalness.

History

- It seems that there is little left in the way of buildings to reflect the history of this area. The steel clad buildings that dominate the area are certainly of the 20th century having no place in the proposed residential area, but where older historical

buildings are found, they should be preserved and incorporated into new development. Perhaps the road network and former railway branch line can retain with some local art to celebrate the industrial past.

- The canal quays and Gabriel's Wharf quay must remain functional for water based activity, and if the former tow-paths are to be developed they should be done sensitively to reflect the past history of the first pound lock canal in England.

Promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

- Developing the area as a low car ownership mixed use area should naturally lead to people leading healthier lifestyles, but it is essential that homes are built with adequate storage to support this.
- If Gabriel's Wharf is developed as a new leisure hub, restoring and enhancing the quay is crucial, and providing improved access which will not interfere with commercial use of the quay is essential.
- We wish the canal to be a vibrant, living waterway, busy with boats. While we strongly support the overall low-traffic aspiration of the scheme, owners of boats, kayaks, etc. need to be able to bring their cars to the appropriate points on the canal or basin for transfer to and from the water, or for loading/unloading.

Building great neighbourhoods.

- We wish that new buildings should reflect the heights of existing tall buildings in the area, a maximum of 4-5 storeys.
- Continuous tall buildings parallel with the canal should be avoided because it will result in shading on the water, and a deadening effect.
- We hope that no new homes will be built close to the railway, and that a road or tree buffer will be introduced to soften any noise from trains.
- A 15 minute community to get most essentials.
- There must be provision for retail units, and there must be given time for businesses to take-up premises. Maybe the city council can offer some business tax relief to help new businesses become established. In addition, we hope that developers are already talking to small retail businesses in the hope that retail premises will be occupied early on.
- There must be provision for facilities such a pharmacy and other essential retail outlets.

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- The site is large and walking from there to the city centre will take between 20 minutes and 40 minutes for a fit and able walker. We hope you will refrain from stating that it will only take 15 minutes.
- If bicycle storage is to be provided for residents it needs to be secure storage for each home, not outside hoops or a shared cycle shed. Bicycles are expensive and owners need secure storage. In addition, storage must be large enough to accommodate all that a family needs, such as sports equipment etc.
- Providing access to the wider area for work or leisure is essential. Cricklepitt Bridge does provide this access, but the Trews Weir suspension bridge, and the footbridge over the flood relief channel are inadequate for current use, let alone any additional use. Both of these bridges must be enhanced by additional river crossings if the volume of people at peak times is to be accommodated.

We would like the council / developers to provide details of other locations which function with low car ownership elsewhere in the UK so we can see how the constraints were resolved, how popular the housing is, and the mix of residents.

We are concerned that your current timeframe seems far too short to draw all of the issues together, represent ideas back to the community, and then move forward towards an outline planning application.

Yours sincerely

K Lewis

Keith Lewis
Chairman

