

Spinnakar Estates
James Mallinson,
Head of South West,
Devcomms South West,
Cheltenham
By email to: formerunit1@devcomms.co.uk

25th September 2025

Dear James

Land at the Corner of Verney Street and Summerland Street, Exeter

Exeter Civic Society has reviewed the consultation documents for this development and welcomes the opportunity to engage with you.

We consider the location to be well suited for a car-free student development, offering good access to public transport, the city centre, and local amenities for pedestrians. However, given the significant number of consented or proposed Co-living and PBSA schemes in Exeter that remain unbuilt or unoccupied, our preference would be to see standard residential units delivered here.

We note the intention to collaborate with *The Printworks* in sharing external social areas. We would expect a formal statement from the managers of that block, along with a joint assessment confirming that the shared external space meets required standards.

We believe the development would benefit from being set back from Summerland Street and Verney Street—at least at ground floor level—to allow for a metre or more of hedging or planting. If the student rooms on Verney Street remain, this would offer some protection from street-level disturbance, although we feel these rooms would be better relocated (see below).

The exterior imagery is inconsistent: some visuals suggest a continuation of *The Printworks*' red brick, others resemble *The Depot*, and some appear grey. In certain images, the brickwork shows two colours; in others, a single shade. We request more clarity on the proposed materials and how they relate to the consented co-living block between Red Lion Lane and Verney Street, as well as other nearby developments.

The brick treatment may prove divisive—either appreciated or disliked. If rendered in a dark, solid tone, it may clash with the lighter development proposed on the opposite corner or it may provide contrast. The vertical emphasis and rippling on the corner add interest but does it darken the interior spaces of the corner units?

The roof design lacks architectural interest and, at its junction with *The Printworks*, the

height is increased rather than stepping down toward its neighbour.

The development appears to offer an active frontage at the Summerland Street and Verney Street corner. However, the remainder of Verney Street includes only four studios and a plant room. The fifth floor contains three meeting rooms and a gym—these might be better placed at ground level, with the studios relocated to the fifth floor to enhance street-level activity.

We encourage you to seek changes from the Highway Authority and Exeter City Council not to have to remove the overflow bus parking in this Verney Street, as it obstructs the building and negatively impacts the street scene. It would be unfortunate if that the active frontage on Verney Street will be blocked by parked buses that cannot be accommodated in the new bus station.

Doors should not open outward onto public spaces or highway, as this could pose a hazard to pedestrians and obstruct pavements. All doors should open inward, and fire exit doors—currently shown flush—should be recessed.

The Society has long been concerned about the size of PBSA and co-living rooms, which serve as individuals' home. While there is no national guidance, London's standard of between 18 and 27sqm offers a benchmark. We believe Exeter, with its different context, warrants room sizes above the minimum. We would also welcome sight of your indicative plans for conversion to standard residential use as required by the Exeter Plan should this building not prove successful as PBSA.

At the public consultation, we requested studio room sizes, as they appear cramped. Communal social space is limited to two floors, which could be improved. There is no indication of refreshment facilities in these areas, and without floor area details, it is difficult to assess whether the communal provision per studio is adequate. The lack of social space on most floors is concerning.

There appears to be one accessible studio per floor, labelled "DDA studio"—just 6 out of 180 units, or 4%, which seems low. Should this not be one wheelchair accessible bedroom provided for every 20 bedrooms, or part thereof, in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations as provided in other developments.

Parking provision for people with disabilities must be fully addressed. We refer you to Exeter City Council's *Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document* and urge you to take greater responsibility for the needs of disabled students, including dedicated car parking—either on-site, at Summerland Gate car park, or on Verney Street in place of the current loading and bus bays.

We recommend that disability access and facilities be reviewed by a relevant disability organisation, and that the needs of disabled students are clearly set out in any Travel Plan submitted in any future planning application.

Cycle storage is currently unclear, as plans are not labelled. According to the SPD, 180 beds require a minimum of 95 cycle spaces for various types. This should ideally be exceeded and supported by shared or community bikes on-site or nearby. An additional 9 visitor cycle spaces and appropriate staff provision should also be included, including showering and changing facilities for staff. Cycle storage should accommodate electric

disability scooters and buggies, or be adaptable for future use.

Necessary improvements to walking and cycling routes—especially desire lines to key destinations and links to LCWIP cycle routes—should be included. We would also like to see footpath widening to ensure safe access to and from Sidwell Street, given the increased footfall on Summerland Street. Paths should be wide enough for two wheelchairs or a pushchair to pass.

A means of safe crossing of Summerland Street should be considered, given the entrance location and desire lines to Summerland Gate car park, St Sidwell's Point, and the bus station. This may involve narrowing the highway by widening the pavement or provision of an island for crossing. This may also give an opportunity for a loading bay adjacent to your entrance.

Regarding waste bins, we would like to understand the impact on collection days. Presumably, bins will be stored internally and wheeled out individually past the main entrance? Is the entrance space wide enough to allow for this and for wheelchair users to pass on the public highway?

We would be pleased to engage further if helpful.

Yours faithfully

Chris Pope
Exeter Civic Society, Strategic Planning and Highways Group