

Head of Commercial Assets
Exeter City Council,
Civic Centre,
Paris Street, Exeter,
Via Email.
estates@exeter.gov.uk

5 November 2025

Dear City Council Estates team,

Public open space disposal - Land at Grace Road Field

This is in response to this recently advertised disposal by two adverts in the Exeter Express & Echo. Whilst you did inform us about this updated consultation, we note that it was only advertised in the weekly bulletin once so we are not sure whether this new consultation is fully compliant with your consultation charter.

Following the Civic Society's response to the land disposal earlier this year, we hereby provide a slightly revised letter of concern with some objections to the disposal of this land. In summary, we object to the following aspects of these disposals:

- The disposal of any land outside of the core area for the energy plant at Grace Road Fields because the council must keep control of public open space.
- Disposal of land between the core site and Clapperbrook Lane because the council must control access to public open space.
- Allowing an easement for pipework that will cross Bronham Playing Fields because it will damage the sports surface.
- Allowing an easement for pipework along the canal towpath because it is an historical structure and there is an alternative route.

In respect of the disposal of the site for the Energy Centre shown by the red line, whilst we are disappointed that the scheme now has outline planning approval, we accept that that area or a similar area will form the basis of the 150+ year lease.

In respect of the area shown in green, **we object** to this additional area being included in the lease because it must remain as public open space, controlled by the city council (or an emerging local authority) as part of the Riverside Valley Park - its current status. We accept that 1 Energy may be required to enhance this area as part of their planning approval to provide a biodiversity net gain (BNG), and that they may need to maintain those features for

a period of time, but they are an energy provider and will not take a long-term interest in maintaining public open space.

As the council will still control the land to the south it makes sense that the 'green' area should remain in the same ownership to support a co-ordinated approach to providing public open space in this area. The Water Lane SPD has many ideas for the development of this space, and with future CIL from the Water Lane area there will be funds to develop the area. Furthermore, the SPD offers to consult on the development of the area - it will be much easier to achieve this if the land is in the control of a local authority.

With the imminent dissolution of Exeter City Council, officers should not dispose of any more land than is absolutely necessary. The future local authority will be able to consider any wider disposal that is necessary to support the Energy Centre.

We object to the disposal of land to the north adjoining Clapperbrook Lane. Whilst we accept that this will form part of the access to the site, we assume it will also form the public access to the wider open green space so the city council must retain control. Any part of the site that will not be fenced to protect the energy plant should remain in local authority control with a right of way granted to 1 Energy for the necessary access. In their planning application they have made it clear that the plant will be largely un-manned so there will be limited access once operational.

In respect of easements for a pipe network, **we object** to the routing of pipework along the canal bank between Clapperbrook Lane and the end of Water Lane. We do not wish to see the historical/ancient route dug up and the public disadvantaged while the works are undertaken. The pipework should be routed along the service road that will be developed between Water Lane and Clapperbrook Lane. We assume that 1 Energy will have a right of way along this route for day to day access and servicing.

In respect of the easement across Bonham Field **we object**. The pipework should be diverted around the field, or across the eastern side, which will add about 140m. The applicant has made it clear to us that distance is not a major issue in delivering hot water to future customers for heating, so a slight diversion should not be an issue when many miles of pipework is expected. Bonham field has recently been nurtured back into use as a playing field and should not be disturbed, having recently been used by the EA as a compound. Routing pipes across the field will result in sports being suspended, and a wide area of the site disturbed by vehicles and spoil. It will then be necessary to reinstate the surface to a sports level which could result in the field being out of use. We all have the experience of highway works where the resultant reinstatement has resulted in a depression after the works once the ground settles – we can expect the same here.

Yours faithfully

K Lewis

Keith Lewis. Chairman