

ECS Committee 18 December 2025

Chairman's Report. Keith Lewis.

In addition to supporting the Planning Group in December, I have been engaged with proposals for the Energy Plant at Grace Rd Fields, proposals for Clarendon House, and reading the Exeter Plan to highlight areas of concern regarding its legal compliance and soundness.

In respect of the proposed Exeter Energy Plant at Grace Road Fields, you will be aware that Exeter Energy submitted a planning application in January, although at the time of writing this I have not viewed it due to access difficulties whilst I was away. The E&E published my letter on 5 December alerting the public to the publication of a notice by ECC for the disposal of part of the Grace Road field and followed this up with X and Facebook posts. It seems that the heat is now likely to be generated from heat pumps rather than by extracting water from the Exe, with gas fired boilers, making the location close to the river less justifiable.

I sent a press release to Devon Live in December regarding street cleaning issues which was published, resulting in a response from Cllr Phil Bialyk espousing the usual concerns about the lack of funds.

Regarding the Royal Clarence, following a meeting on Friday 6th December with Andy, myself, 3 members of Devon Historic Buildings Group, Todd Gray and St David councillors, it was agreed that I write to the new owner/developer of the site NooKo, asking for the group to meet with them to discuss the protection of historical elements of the building, but to date I have not had any reply.

I have taken the lead on responses to proposals to redevelop Clarendon House with a response to a pre-application planning submission in November 2024 and then a public consultation by the developer which ended mid-January. Our response in January was more critical because of various aspects of concern which resulted in the developer's architects, Chapman Taylor, having an on-line meeting with Gert and myself. They explained that ECC and Historic England have guided the current design with a suggested 'statement building' at the bottom of Heavitree Road. They also explained that the new crossing on Western Way is a replacement of the pedestrian crossing outside the Hotel. We did not agree on much, although they did agree to make some adjustments based on our opinions if possible.

Society Programme.

Can committee members help find speakers for the rest of the year – July, September, October and December?

7 March 2025. A talk to the Devon Archaeology Association about the work of the Society by Keith Lewis.

15 March. Stuart Blaylock will talk about the history of Bowhill House.

12 April. 14.00 Spring Social at the Quaker Meeting House with an opening talk by Chris Dent about the building/Quakers.

17 May. John Davidson. **We need to choose between The arrival and impact of the railways in Exeter - 1844 to 1900 or The lost rivers of Exeter (Taddiford, Longbrook, Shyte Brook, Northbrook and Coombe brook, and their effects on the landscape of the city).**

21 June. John Smith will talk to us about Roman Life in Exeter. This will be a 'visual presentation' without an electronic presentation. **I will not be available for this meeting so need a stand-in to manage the meeting.**

January 2026. John Davidson will talk about A selection of Exeter Buildings and stories associated with them - including Franklin Cinema, Cavern Club, Theatre Royal, Southernhay House, Devon and Exeter Hospital (Southernhay). This is a more light-hearted talk with some musical extracts.

Planning Group Report. Keith Lewis

The planning group have met twice since the last committee meeting; Gert chaired the meeting on 7 January covering 4 weeks of applications, and the three substantive members of the group met on 4 February covering 4 weeks of applications.

The most significant application during this period is for the Energy Centre advertised on the list of 16 January. No response has been sent to date, but I understand that there are departures from what was initially consulted upon, and what was reported to the Executive committee in July 2024 when considering the land disposal. We are likely to object, and I expect the council is likely to take some time to make a decision about the application.

The applications advertised in December did not include any that caused concern and did include an application by the city council to redevelop part of the Wonford sports centre to which we had not objection. I understand that the council is yet to identify funding for the proposals.

In January, the most significant applications were for the refurbishment of Clarendon House to residential to which we did not raise any concerns because this is permitted development, although it will result in the loss of employment opportunities in the city centre. My understanding from the developers' architects is that this is a fall-back position should the student accommodation proposals fail to receive planning approval.

Other notable applications in January are the Energy Plant and a replacement for Mallinson's bridge on the quay. The planning group are seeking additional information about materials, but having looked briefly at the application I doubt we will want to object to it, but may express concerns about detailed aspects in this sensitive position.

Many of the concerns or objections sent to the planners related to domestic alterations which will affect the street scene and are not compliant with the council's guide for domestic extensions and alterations.

The planning group next meet on 25 February.

Having failed to recruit any new members to the group over the past year I will try to recruit part-time members which may be less daunting, perhaps attending every other meeting. It is crucial that we have at least three members to consider applications.