

Strategic Planning & Highways Group

Chair's Report 10 Dec 2025

SP&H communicated via emails and telephone calls since its SP&H meeting on 31 July 2025. We are planning for an in-person meeting early in the new year, once we know about the grant application outcome. We will then have to plan for the Exeter Plan hearings which are planned for March or April 2026.

Responses by SP&H Group to Consultations

North Street: Based on our 'Vision for North Street' document, Exeter Civic Society together with InExeter and Fabrica Architecture applied for an 'Active Travel England' grant to fund an innovative, inclusive and evidence-based engagement process, combining cutting-edge digital tools with proven in-person techniques with the aim to prepare a planning process for North Street and engage with DCC and ECC on measures to implement the findings. The application was handed in on 14 November; we will hear in the week starting with 15 December whether we have been shortlisted for interview. If successful the project will start in February 2026 and will run for a year. Our application includes £1500 for staffing for public-facing activities and internal working group meetings, and £275 for 11 monthly reports – if successful this will come with no extra costs for the society. More details on our website under 'Current Concerns', "[North Street Area Improvements](#)".

Mary Arches Car-park: ECS handed in comments on the additions and changes to the Mary Arches Redevelopment full planning application on 23 November. We said we did not consider that the proposed changes go far enough to justify a change to our previous objection to these proposals. We continue to object to the amended application because the applicant has not made adequate changes to the scheme to make it acceptable. With central input from Pierluigi Chinelatto Keith sent in the additional letter, having run it past the Strategic Planning Group. For more details see the [information in the news section](#). We had expected this application being brought to ECC Planning Committee in its second December meeting, but it now will be next year (supposedly as late as April). This will leave us time to follow through with some further activities whatever the grant decision will be.

Redevelopment of the Former Police Station and Magistrate Court Site:

This planning application was considered by Exeter City Council's Planning committee on Monday 8th December with a recommendation for approval. We are disappointed that the concerns about harm to neighbouring residents have been outweighed by other issues, like ECC's shortfall on the approved housing supply. Keith spoke in the opposer role, focussing on these issues and asking again why the officers did not follow their own 'Residential Design SPD', which sets up a minimum of 22m between habitable windows to provide privacy and feeling at ease and comfortable at home. The officer's recommendation was in the end followed by 8 to 2 votes, with an amended S106 condition to access the permissible route through the site 24/7. For more details see the [News section of our website](#).

Royal Clarence Hotel Redevelopment We have submitted our comments and some objections to aspects of this planning application. The revised planning drawings now propose retaining the surviving timber frame structure of 16-17

Cathedral Yard which we mostly refer to as the Well House buildings. The revised plans were submitted after significant objections from Historic England, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Devon Archaeological Society, and Devon Buildings Group to the removal of the Well House structure. We have concerns about the lack of detail relating to these listed buildings, how the new concrete structure will be supported by the remaining historical structure, and to the proposed met cladding of the rear of the new building. For more details see [our response on the website](#).

Further Activities

Meetings with Princesshay Centre Manager: As part of our outreach initiative Keith and Gert met with Jon Walton, the Centre Manager, on 17 Oct and 3 Nov. We discussed plans to reopen the former Debenhams building and the future for businesses in Paris Street and Sidwell Street. After some refurbishments in the buildings these units will remain as opportunities for start ups and independent shops. The former Debenhams building needs to undergo substantial renovations but the hope is to see it open for other businesses in two years' time. Jon Walton showed us the East Gate Plaque which he hopes to see installed somewhere in the compound soon. He also promised to look into the renovation of the Phoenix, on the wall opposite Nando. We agreed to continue with our contacts.

Meeting with Guildhall Centre Operations Manager: Together with Mia Willtt from InExeter Gert met on 29 Oct with Chris Tyler and his assistant Ginny Fellows for a walk around North Street. Photos taken and the discussion are documented in a outcomes report written directly after the meeting. Chris Tyler was very interested and supportive for what we are going to do, as he wants to get ahead with further improvements of his shopping centre and sees this as a good opportunity to bring forces together.

North Street Inspection with Cllr Andy Ketchin: On 30 Oct Gert met with Cllr Ketchin, both on ECC and DCC to walk around the North Street area and discuss potential measures for improvement. Cllr Ketchin is on Hatoc and has experience with the transformation of Magdalene Road. The focus was very much guided on low-cost improvements and what could be done in a reasonable time frame. We inspected a series of measures already in place in neighbouring streets which will help the implementation of them in North Street. Gert took photos and still has to write a report on this.

Tree Preservation Taskforce

As at meeting on 29 Oct, the working group listed the state of various recent initiatives and developed an engagement proposal how to go forward next year. This includes information after the AGM, supporting visits of our Chair to local organisations and an event following the meeting on 21 February.

David Solman informed the AGM on the group's Tree Mapping project. Members will support Keith at his talks to the Heavitree Society (10 Dec) and the St Thomas History Society (6 March). The group is planning a tree map workshop around the 22

Feb, where it wants to connect with interested members from our society and the neighbourhood associations we have established contacts with.

For more information about the project, see the autumn 2025 entry in [the tree preservation section of our website](#).

Gert Vonhoff, 10 Dec 2025