

## Strategic Planning & Highways Group Chair's Report 12 Dec 2024

SP&H communicated via emails and telephone calls since our meeting on 9 Oct 2024.

### Responses by SP&H Group to Consultations:

#### 1. New consultation Former Police Station and Magistrate Court site

- feedback to developer: <https://dpp1.co.uk/heavitreeroad/>; GV met with Planning Group to finish letter to developer, which was sent 10 Oct
- ECC pre-application request, deadline 21 Oct 2024 (extended amount of material, but still no floorplans): <https://exeter.gov.uk/planning-services/permissions-and-applications/related-documents/?appref=24/0561/MP> ; GV and KL sent an reworked version of the letter to ECC Planning on 21 Oct
- Exeter Civic Society sees what is presented for the new round of consultations as a huge improvement to the previous design, which we objected to. The proposals are much more in line with the surrounding area, with eight separate blocks and a significantly reduced number of rooms providing less impact to the street scene and neighbours. The positioning and direction of the buildings relate better to elements of the surroundings.
- Our main concerns are the increased proximity to the buildings in Higher Summerland, the fact that the buildings within the plot do not follow the window to window distance of 22m as suggested by the Exeter Design Guide, the missing of any floor plans with measurements and layout details, and the inclusion of a potential bus lane in front of the buildings on Heavitree Road.
- Details can be found under <https://exetercivicsociety.org.uk/former-police-station-and-magistrate-court-ecs-response-to-second-proposal/>

#### 2. Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4, deadline 30 Nov 2024: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/devon-and-torbay-local-transport-plan-4/>

- KL prepared our response, with input from Peter and Gert, handed in on 30 Nov
- The Society is interested in both, the proposals for Exeter and for its travel to work area, which the draft points out is one of the largest in England. Our understanding is that about 30,000 people commute to the city every day, mostly by single occupancy vehicle. This is our starting point for our response, the details of which you can follow up in our response under: <https://exetercivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ECS-response-to-DCC-LPT4-consultation-30-Nov-2024.pdf>

#### 3. Countywide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), response focussed on Boniface Trail (Credition to Exeter), deadline 30 Nov 2024: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/countywide-local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan-lcwip/>

- Charles Curnock prepared our response, with input from KL and GV, handed in on 30 Nov

- The Council's two proposals for the Boniface Trail are a route alongside the A377 and an alternative trail through lanes largely to the north of the A377. The route alongside the A377 is difficult and potentially expensive in particular for the half between Newton St Cyres and Cowley Bridge. This route is also potentially dangerous and people using it will breathe vehicle exhaust fumes. The route through the lanes would be much less expensive and quicker to implement however it is considered by the Society to be unsafe and in parts unreasonably hilly. The alternative route through lanes to the North of the rail line and A377 road is not safe and can become very narrow in places, as these lanes are used by a lot of traffic particularly when, as is often the case, there are road works or accidents on the A377. We outlined for these reasons an alternative route along the rail line, details can be found under <https://exetercivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Boniface-Trail-Consultation-submitted-30-Nov-2024.pdf>
4. **Exeter Bus Service Improvement Plan**, deadline 10 Oct:  
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/traffic-regulation-orders/exeter-bus-service-improvement-plan/>
    - GV prepared our response, handed in on 11 Oct.
    - We are disappointed that the suggestions are still behind what we advised upon at the earlier stage, but overall we are in favour of what is to be decided upon now, with some concerns.
    - Details can be found under <https://exetercivicsociety.org.uk/ecs-responds-to-bus-lane-improvement-plans/>
    - Since then HATOC at its November meeting watered down the bus-lane times for Fore Street in Heavitree even further, under the pressure of the local businesses.
  5. **Planning for Teignbridge District Council Local Plan Examination**
    - AMcK and KL represented ECS at the meeting on 5 Nov, commenting on our points about Markham Village, Atwell Farm and Peamore
  6. **LDA Design Focus Group 'Heavitree and Whipton Streets'**
    - GV represented ECS at the meeting on 19 Nov 2024
    - Led by LDA staff, with a good number of Councillors attending, but only in a listening role, residents from both sides of the divide, business group representatives; but Exeter Cycling Campaign was not invited (probably seen as too toxic)
    - Work took place in small working groups, with outcomes presented to the whole assembly; LDA will use the details to feed back to HATOC
    - Not many new insights, the meeting was really to try to re-establish a way of communicating between the different fractions
    - GV explained that longer strategic planning with base funding would be needed to create a basis for real change, early and meaningful participation of residents and interest groups would be crucial

## Updates

- **Energy Centre, Grace Road Playing Fields**
  - KL handed in a 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to 'Express & Echo' for 5 Dec issue, alerting to the lack of open debate and the deadline for responses
  - The council is obliged to advertise the possible disposal of land twice, and they are now doing so in 'Express & Echo' (issue of 28 Nov and 5

Dec) on the Public Notices page. But there has been no public discussion or exhibition to alert the public to the loss of this land and to obtain their views. Responses must be sent to the city's Estates Surveyor by 31 December

- **KL started a new campaign concerning the site of the former Exwick Playing Fields Changing Rooms**
  - ECS sent a letter of objection to Exeter City Council planners for Exeter College's proposals to construct classrooms at the site of the former changing rooms instead of the promised new changing rooms with classrooms on the first floor which received planning approval from Exeter City Council in February 2023.
  - For details see <https://exetercivicsociety.org.uk/society-objects-to-exeter-college-swapping-changing-rooms-for-classrooms-for-the-former-site-of-exwick-changing-rooms/>
- **Larkbeare House and Grounds**
  - The property is on the market again, with recognition of the changed circumstances, with DCC asking for a cautious development of the site
- **'Planning Ahead for 2025' as 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the AGM-meeting. 16 Nov**
  - Proposals for projects were discussed and approved, now leads and members working on these projects have to be found
    - Exeter Energy Network (lead: Keith Lewis)
    - West of the River Exe Working Group
    - Networking for developing a Prospectus for the 'Eastgate Redevelopment'

### **Tree Preservation Taskforce**

- Steve Mariner received a reply from Bob Stevenson, DCC, about street trees; mainly stating that he is left without much funding and capacity, he refers the responsibility back to ECC, with a few exceptions where street trees become a hazard
- David Solman agreed at the AGM to take over the lead of this group; he is in contact with David Gendle (gardener running its own business, member of Pines Gardens Society) to support him; GV and SM handed over all papers to David Solman
- Hilary Neville and Stephen Mariner will remain part of the team

Gert Vonhoff, 3 Dec 2024