

Talk to ECC Planning committee 8 December Co-living and PBSA at former Police Station site

1. My name is Keith Lewis, chairman of Exeter Civic Society, and I am here today to question why this application is recommended for approval when it is acknowledged that aspects of it will cause harm to those living in homes at Higher Summerlands and St Michaels Close. The Society accepts this this proposal is much improved from that refused previously, and we are pleased that further adjustments have been made in response to our and others concerns.
2. But is disappointing that the height of the student blocks will block views of distant hills from Gladstone Road – such blocks continue to limit views around the city.
3. I congratulate the planning officer, John Douglas, on writing a clear and balanced report setting out inadequacies of aspects of this application.
4. The Council has clear policies which require residential development to consider resident's privacy. Paragraph 7.2 of the council's Residential Design SPD says - *...designs will be required to allow people to feel at ease and comfortable at home.* And, in paragraph 7.20 it states – *These standards apply to distances between proposed AND existing dwellings*
5. In respect of Privacy the SPD says in Paragraph 7.16 *People should be able to enjoy a degree of privacy which makes them comfortable in their dwellings without being overlooked or hemmed in.* And it sets a MINIMUM distance of 22m between habitable rooms including living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens and bedrooms according to paragraph 7.17.
6. This is a very large site and there is no reason why the applicant should not have drawn the 22m line on their development plan and then contained new buildings within that – perhaps you can ask the developer why they chose to disregard these guidelines? The society raised the 22m 'rule' in our pre-application response, and repeated this when the application was made. The applicant has had two opportunities to meet the 22m rule – why has Mr Douglas not enforced it?
7. The Society scrutinises all planning applications so when I looked at an application for a single detached house for a site in Pinhoe last week I was

pleased to see that the architect had drawn 22m lines from neighbouring homes and then designed the new home within those lines to avoid overlooking. If that architect can do this why can't this developer? Perhaps you can ask the developer for their reasoning?

8. The proposed 5 and 6 storey buildings will dwarf homes in Higher Summerlands and residents will not only be overlooked but have a sense of being hemmed in. Why should they have to accept fundamental changes to their lives and neighbourhood? Paragraph 7.24 of the SPD says – *Residents should be able to enjoy good quality outlook, without adjacent buildings being overbearing.* And it goes on to say that *where habitable windows face onto a blank or largely blank wall of another building, a minimum distance equal to twice the height of the building MUST be provided between the two buildings.* Block 3 is just 14m from 9 Higher Summerlands, but with that block being 16m to the eaves this calculation requires it to be 32m distant. And if this principle is applied to block 2 which has eaves 12m above the floor level of the Higher Summerlands homes, then a distance of 24m is desirable- not the 20m proposed.
9. The implication for the residents in Higher Summerlands is not just a few homes/ people overlooking. Each section of block 2 has 7 rooms per level – there are 4 levels, so 28 people or more potentially looking into their homes. Is this acceptable? Would you be happy to have 28 homes overlooking your bedroom?
10. It is stated that the council can only demonstrate 4 years and 3.2 months housing supply, but I hope you will not be persuaded that this is the most important decision you have to make today – and cause harm to local residents.
11. There are three decisions that you can make today. Reject the application which I don't think is necessary, Approve, which will mean that YOU will be endorsing harm to local residents, or Defer – asking the developer and planning officer to redesign blocks 2 and 3 of the co-living blocks so that residents are not subjected to so such harm.

12. I would also urge you to encourage more tree planting on the boundary with St Michaels Close to help soften the impact of the 6 storey block 3. The applicant is proposing 12 trees on this boundary but the level of planting is limited because of the narrowness of the verge. An option is to ask the developer to plant more trees in the grounds of St Michaels Close, especially the recommended specimen trees. It is proposed that landscaping will remain open to negotiations so I urge local councillors to encourage such provision.

Thank You