

Harlequins Centre Redevelopment, Exeter

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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This report should be read in conjunction with information submitted as part of the planning application including the Design & Access Statement

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) supports a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of Harlequins Shopping Centre, Exeter.
- 1.2 The report summarises the landscape and visual assessment that has been undertaken in relation to the application site and its landscape setting. It has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd edition GLVIA 3 (2013) (Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), and explains the design approaches and mitigation measures that have been embedded in the design process to minimise the visual impact of the proposals.
- 1.3 The Design and Access Statement and drawings accompanying the planning application fully explain the development proposals. These should be referred to for further information if required.

The Purpose of the Document

- 1.4 This report forms part of a suite of documents produced in support of the planning application.
- 1.5 The report identifies the landscape setting and wider context of the site, and defines this in terms of landscape and visual character and the key elements which contribute to the composition of this character. The landscape and visual appraisal are dealt with as separate, although linked, procedures.
- 1.6 It provides an objective landscape and visual appraisal of the site and its context, and identifies potential effects on the landscape and users of the surrounding area as a result of development considering the design approach and mitigation that is proposed to minimise these effects. The report summarises the qualitative assessment of the potential effects of the development proposals on the identified landscape and visual receptors.
- 1.7 The assessment has been prepared during the development of the detailed proposals to enable the appraisal to guide and influence the emerging design decisions regarding the layout, scale and massing and detailed form of the buildings and landscape proposals so that they respond to analysis of the potential effects on the landscape/townscape and existing views. Discussions with Exeter City Council Officers, Historic England, other stakeholders and the community have informed the development of the appraisal and we have included viewpoints agreed with these parties.

The Application

- 1.8 The application proposes demolition of existing Harlequins Shopping Centre and pedestrian bridge over Paul Street and making good of the façade of the Guildhall Centre, following removal of the pedestrian bridge. The proposed development includes the refurbishment of the upper floors of 21-22 Queen Street to provide co-living accommodation and the erection of two blocks accommodating up to 300 co-living bedrooms and associated amenity areas, a hotel with up to 120 bedrooms and associated space including bar and

restaurant. In addition, a car park with up to 40 spaces, an interactive display space for the interpretation of the heritage of the site and surroundings, enhancement of the urban realm on the adjacent highways and on site landscaping are proposed

1.9 The proposed development aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Sympathetic redevelopment of this site which is identified as having negative character in the Central Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
- Delivery of a high quality development which enhances the character of the City Centre and Central and St David's Conservation Areas.
- Enhancement of the public realm on Queen Street and Paul Street, and improved connections between the site with the existing facilities in the surrounding area
- Enhancement of key landscape and ecological features, and provision of a new public green space along the historic City Wall.

Site Location

1.10 The site is located at Paul St, Exeter EX4 3TT to the northwest of the Guildhall Shopping Centre. It is located within St. David's Ward in Exeter City Centre.

1.11 The Harlequins Shopping Centre was developed in the 1980's following clearance of the historic buildings on the site following the Second World War. The site comprises a linear parcel of land bounding Paul Street to the southeast and the historic city wall to the northwest. The junction with Iron Bridge, North street and Bartholomew Street East is to the southwest and the rear of properties fronting Queen street to the northeast.

1.12 A full description of the existing site and contextual townscape character is provided in Section 3.

Study Area

1.13 The initial study area for the assessment was defined as a zone extending 5km from the site boundaries and is shown in Figure 1.

1.14 This study area has been used to allow an understanding of the wider landscape context and setting within which the site is located; whilst limiting information to that which is most relevant and avoiding excessive analysis which does not directly benefit the assessment.

Methodology

- 1.15 The methodology for this assessment is based on the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd edition (2013), (Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) (GLVIA 3). A description of the methodology used is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

2 Baseline Appraisal

3.1 This section records the existing baseline conditions and outlines the relevant landscape and visual characteristics and conditions within the study area. The baseline appraisal records the following;

- Planning Policies and Statutory Landscape Designations;
- Historic Environment;
- Landscape & Townscape Character Appraisal;
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV); and
- Visual Appraisal.

Planning Policies and Statutory Landscape Designations

3.2 This section outlines planning policies and statutory landscape designations which are relevant when assessing the potential landscape and visual impacts of the development.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It has a number of paragraphs that are relevant to the proposals. Key relevant paragraphs relating to this LVIA are highlighted below, and have been considered in the assessment of landscape and amenity value of the site and its context.

3.4 The NPPF states that the '*purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development*'. There are three objectives in achieving sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. Those relevant in this LVIA are [Para 8]:

- **'a social objective** – *to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- **an environmental objective** – *to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

It goes on to explain that '*planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area*' [Para 9].

3.5 In discussing "Strategic Policies" the NPPF states that policies should '*make sufficient provision for... conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment,*

including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation’ [Para 20].

- 3.6 In “Achieving Well-Designed Places” the NPPF states that *‘planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just in the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promotes health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.’ [Para. 127]*
- 3.7 And notes that *‘permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions’ [Para. 130], and that ‘in determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in the area so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings’ [Para 131].*
- 3.8 Chapter 16, *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, highlights the need for strategy for the ‘conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment’. This includes ‘the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring’; ‘the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’; and ‘opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.’ Paragraph 200 explains that ‘local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas’ and ‘within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.’

Local Planning Policy

- 3.9 The Exeter City Council Core Strategy (adopted 2012) includes a number of relevant requirements and policies which are summarised below:

CP17: Design and Local Distinctiveness page 62:

“All proposals for development will exhibit a high standard of sustainable design that is resilient to climate change and complements or enhances Exeter’s character, local identity and cultural diversity.”

On design and local distinctiveness, the Core Strategy states that *“In designing development, wherever its location, particular attention should be given to ensuring:*

i) High quality townscape, landscape and amenity

The layouts of buildings, routes and spaces must be designed as one piece (integrated design) to achieve good enclosure, high quality public and private spaces, active frontages, visual delight and good quality amenity.

ii) High architectural quality

Development must be fit for purpose, providing specified space standards and facilities which meet a range of needs over time and which minimise energy consumption. Internal spaces and layout must be flexible and allow for adaption, conversion and extension. Buildings must be durable, well-built and aesthetically pleasing.

iii) Places have their own distinct identity

Development must enhance and/or create local distinctiveness and be legible so that people can find their way around by the design and layout of buildings. Schemes should have a clear design rationale and must be built using, or reflecting, the limited Exeter palette of materials.”

Statutory Landscape Designations

- 3.9 There are a number of Statutory Landscape & Ecological designations within the study area; including County Wildlife Sites, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland, but these have an extremely limited visual inter-relationship with the proposed development site. These areas are shown on Figure 3.
- 3.10 The closest of these designations to the site are the River Exe Valley Park CWS (0.4km to the west), the Taddyforde Brook/Lower Hoopern Valley County Wildlife Site (CWS) approximately 0.75km to the north, and the Bonhay Road Cutting SSSI (approximately 0.4km to the west). Designations further away from the site, but inside the study area, include Belvedere Meadows (LNR, within Duryard Valley Park CWS, 2.0km to the north), Barley Valley LNR, (which sits within the Alphington - Whitestone Valley Park CWS 1.2km to the west), Stoke Woods SSSI (3.0km north), Exe Estuary SPA/SSSI (4.0km south), and Brampford Speke SSSI (6.0km north). There is ancient woodland 2.5km north-west at Exwick Wood, 3.0km north-east at Stoke Woods, 4.5km north-west at Newton Wood and 4.0km south-west at Pollards Hill Brake.
- 3.11 Because of the limited visual relationship to the site to these designated areas they have not been taken forward further in the Landscape and Visual Assessment.

Heritage Assets

- 3.12 The proposed development site is located within the Central Conservation Area, and immediately adjacent to St David's Conservation Area, and the study area includes a large number of Heritage Assets. The Conservation Area boundaries follows the City Wall, and is shown on Figure 5 – Townscape Character Areas.
- 3.13 A separate Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken and therefore the LVIA does not include an assessment of the potential Heritage Impact of the proposals on individual Conservation Area, Listed Building's, Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks & Gardens.
- 3.14 The LVIA does consider the effect of the development on the character of the relevant Conservation Areas and Townscape Character of which these are constituent parts, and on the character of the Registered Park & Garden and the setting of the City Wall (Scheduled Ancient Monument) where it passes through the site.

Central Conservation Area

- 3.15 Central Conservation Area designated by Exeter City Council (ECC) in 2002 and the Central Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) was published in 2002.
- 3.16 Central Conservation Area covers the area within the historic City Wall, with the Harlequins Centre on the western edge adjacent to Queen Street and Paul Street. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) identifies the modern character of much of

the City Centre following post-war redevelopment, and highlights the importance of intact historic areas such as Cathedral Yard and Lower High Street.

- 3.17 The Harlequins Centre, Paul Street and surrounding spaces are identified as having a negative contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. A significant view to the north is identified from the service area to the rear of the shopping centre, and the buildings facing Queen Street are identified as providing a positive contribution. Rougemont Gardens are located within Central Conservation Area and are discussed separately below.
- 3.18 The Conservation Area has been sub-divided into smaller areas of which the site is located within Character Area 3 – High Street and Guildhall of the Central Conservation Area. The CAAMP
- *‘...the vast new buildings of the Guildhall Shopping Centre, and the Harlequins Centre beyond Paul Street, have obliterated most of the historic street pattern and conflict with the scale, form and materials of the many historic buildings which surround the modern development’* and notes that the adjacent Guildhall Shopping Centre includes *‘Modern buildings of no particular merit’*.
- 3.19 Central Conservation Area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

St. David’s Conservation Area

- 3.20 The proposed development is located immediately to the southeast of the St David’s Conservation Area, designated by ECC in 1993. The St David’s Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was published in 2005.
- 3.21 The Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan characterises the St David’s Conservation Area as an area which represents the 18th and 19th century expansion north-west of the city walls along and around three historic arterial routes that lead into the heart of the city. The key characteristics identified by ECC (2005) as contributing to the significance of the St David’s Conservation Area include:
- *A linear pattern of development predominantly terraces and semi-detached pairs;*
 - *A hierarchy of built form comprising mainly two- and three-storey buildings in terraces, large town houses and semi-detached pairs;*
 - *Historic buildings add a recognisable quality to the area and impact on the character and appearance of the area;*
 - *The palette of materials is predominantly brick (unpainted) and render painted in pale shades, stucco (plaster) widely used on villas and grander houses, roofs are mostly slate and tile;*
 - *Landmark buildings which create a strong sense of place;*

- *Charity buildings are rich in architectural detail and are distinctive buildings that make a strong contribution to the character of the area;*
- *Parks provide areas of attractive green space that enhance the townscape, together with trees and private gardens with mature planting add charm and character;*
- *Historic pedestrian routes and alleyways running between and behind residential developments, characterised by brick walls;*
- *Mixed uses including residential, educational, commercial and community add distinctiveness to the character of the area.*

3.22 St David's Conservation Area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

Listed Buildings

3.23 A large number of listed buildings and structures are located within the Central and St. David's Conservation Areas - including Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II. (See figure 4). Within the site, the arch in the city all leading to Maddocks Row is Grade II listed. Further Grade II listed buildings are located adjacent to the site within Queen Street, Northernhay Street and Iron Bridge.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

3.24 The historic city wall which forms the north-eastern site boundary is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is part of the Roman and Medieval wall which encircles Exeter City Centre. The city wall forms the boundary between the Central and St. David's Conservation Areas, and the potential effect of the proposed development on the setting of the City Wall is considered in the Townscape Character Appraisal below.

3.25 Further disconnected sections of historic city all are located approximately 120m to the southwest and 60m to the northeast of the site.

3.26 The Exeter Castle and Rougemont Castle (100m north east of the site), Exeter Cathedral Green (200m southeast of the site) and St Nicholas Priory (150m south of the site) are also Scheduled Monuments.

Registered Parks and Gardens

3.27 Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens (approximately 50m northeast of the site) is a Registered Park and Garden and comprise a 19th Century public park which was development from a 17th Century Public Park, together with the grounds of an 18th Century Mansion which was converted to a public park in the early 20th Century. Both gardens are owned and managed by Exeter City Council.

- 3.28 An assessment of the potential effect of the proposed development on the character of Northernhay and Rougemont Gardens is considered in the Townscape Character Appraisal below.

Landscape and Townscape Character Baseline Appraisal

- 3.29 The site sits wholly within within Exeter City Centre, which is located within **National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands**. The wider character area consists of a hilly landscape of villages, hamlets, farmsteads, hedgebanks and winding sunken lanes, rising in height towards the fringes of the NCA with steep-sided but flat-bottomed river valleys cut through the hills, opening onto wide flood plains.
- 3.30 The key characteristics of this area, which relate to the site and study area include:
- *The underlying red sandstone and consequent red soil dominate the landscape through ploughed fields, cliffs and exposures, and are visually evident in the traditional stone and cob farmsteads, hamlets and villages that are scattered across the area.*
 - *Rivers have created the topography that we see today and they remain as key landscape features. The core of the Devon Redlands is low lying, with land rising around the periphery, except to the south where it gives way to the coast.*
 - *These hills form a prominent landscape feature which is visible across the Redlands and beyond. They provide a distinctive landscape setting for the Roman city of Exeter.*
- 3.31 Because the proposed development is wholly within Exeter City Centre and is similar in scale to surrounding buildings it is considered that the proposed development will have a minimal effect on the Devon Redlands national character area, and an assessment of the potential effect has not been considered further in the LVIA.
- 3.32 **National Character Area 149: The Culm** covers a large part of Devon and is located to the north-west of Exeter. The NCA borders on the western edge of the visual envelope of the site along the higher ground that forms the western edge of the Exe Valley, but has limited inter-visibility with the site so has not been considered further in this LVIA.

Devon Landscape Character Areas

- 3.33 The Devon Character Areas describe the variations in character between different areas and types of landscape in the county. The Character Areas within the study area are shown on Figure 4.
- 3.34 The site is located wholly within Exeter City Centre, with Exeter Slopes & Hills to the west, and Haldon Ridge & Foothills and Exe Estuary & Farmlands further to the south-west and south respectively. The character of these areas is described briefly below:

Exeter City Centre

- 3.35 Exeter is a compact town set within the Exe River Valley, with the city centre located on a low ridge on the north-east side of a curve in the River Exe - originally a Roman settlement. The City Centre is defined by the grid of the city centre streets and the line of the City Wall, which date back to the Roman and Medieval periods. Buildings within the city comprise a mix of historic and modern structures, at a range of scales including a core of 2-4 storey commercial and residential properties with a fine urban grain, and a number of significantly larger structures including the Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park, Mary Arches Car Park and a number of large buildings including the Rougemont Hotel, Exeter College University buildings, Exeter Library, Renslade House and John Lewis. The Cathedral Church of St Peter, St Michael and All Angels Mount Dinham, St David's Church and Southernhay Church are all key historic landmarks located in the city centre and visible within the wider city and landscape. The City Centre is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

Exeter Slopes & Hills

- 3.36 This landscape feels elevated above surrounding areas, offering views across Exeter city and the Exe estuary as well as to Crediton, Dartmoor and Haldon Ridge in the distance. Areas of steep slopes, particularly those that face northwards, are well wooded with plantation and ancient semi-natural woodland. Within the narrow and tightly enclosed valleys the character is more intimate. Distinctive views, strong topography, notable woodland and proximity to Exeter contribute to a strong sense of place. Despite the proximity to Exeter this landscape has a strongly rural character with increasing tranquillity and sense of remoteness in the small intimate valleys as well as further west away from the urban fringe and A30 corridor. This landscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Exe Estuary and Farmlands

- 3.37 The estuary is the visual focus of this part of Devon. This is a landscape of open skies characterised by the sound of seabirds, the masts of boats, and mud and dunes at Dawlish Warren. Views over the river are distinctive and the detail of the scene changes according to tide and season. The whole scene is framed by rising landform on either side, which provides low level enclosure. The land rises gradually to the high ground of Woodbury Common to the east and Haldon to the west. The patchwork of fields and hedgerows, designed landscapes, woodlands and estuarine and coastal features creates a landscape of high scenic quality which forms an important part of the setting to Exeter, Exmouth and Dawlish. The underlying red soils, frequent vernacular buildings, estuarine and coastal views and hillside backdrops lend a strong sense of place. The shoreline railway and canal add distinctiveness and frequent small boats and moorings emphasise the maritime character.

Haldon Ridge and Foothills

- 3.38 The Haldon Ridge and Foothills is one of the most prominent landscape features in eastern Devon, affording a textured, rising backdrop to much of the surrounding landscape, including parts of Exeter. The area encompasses a narrow, forested plateau with adjoining steep scarp slopes broadening to more open farmed ridges and valleys to the south. In places, the sides of the main wooded ridge are deeply incised with combs and small river valleys lending topographic interest. Collectively these land uses give rise to high scenic quality and provide varied texture and seasonal changes.
- 3.39 Visibility from the Haldon Ridge & Foothills character area is limited to distant views of the site from higher ground, where the proposed development would be seen at a distance and in the context of the surrounding city centre buildings and structures. An assessment of the potential effect of the development on this character area has not been considered further in the LVIA.
- 3.40 Similarly visibility from the Exe Estuary and Farmlands character area is screened by intervening landform, vegetation and planting and an assessment of the potential effect of the development on this character area has therefore not been considered in the LVIA.

Townscape Character Areas

- 3.41 In order to assess the potential effect of the development on the character of the surrounding townscape we have identified a number of Townscape Character areas which are shown on Figure 5 and described below.

Queen Street

- 3.42 Queen Street comprises a large scale, formal streetscape with an urban character with a variety of three storey traditional buildings and associated materials, including landmarks such as the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Rougemont Hotel. The street is lined by a mix retail, commercial and civic land uses - with a change from educational/civic uses to the north-west to retail as Queen Street nears the High Street. There are high numbers of pedestrians (from Exeter College, the University and Central Station, as well as residents, workers, shoppers and visitors), along with cyclists vehicular movement and associated activity. The street is broadly level with well contained views and vistas along the street - terminated by the High Street and Cathedral Towers to the south-east. Trees and/or vegetation are generally absent, but there are glimpsed views to Northernhay Gardens and some trees the rear of the pavement to the north-west and in the station forecourt. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Exeter College & Rougemont Hotel

- 3.43 The College's city centre campus and Rougemont Hotel are a larger scale group of buildings including educational and hotel uses and associated external spaces and infrastructure to the south of Queen Street. They have a larger scale urban grain and associated external spaces and infrastructure, with little external recreational space. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

Iron Bridge Street & St David's Hill

- 3.44 This historic route forms one of the western approaches into the city centre, with the dramatic Iron Bridge cutting across the Exe Street valley - linking St David's Hill to Northgate. The tighter grain of the build form creates a more intimate urban character of generally well preserved traditional buildings. There are several listed buildings and structures. Trees and/or vegetation generally uncommon and restricted to private dwelling frontages and St Bartholomew's Cemetery to the south. Views of the site are limited to a small number of generally well contained glimpsed views, with views of the southern part of the development from Iron Bridge/St David's Hill. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Northernhay Street

- 3.45 Northernhay Street is a narrow historic street which retains some of the character of the pre-war city. The area comprises generally well preserved 2-3 storey traditional buildings with associated traditional materials, including several listed buildings and structures and a number of pleasant groupings including Northernhay Square. The street slopes steeply down to the southwest, where it joins Lower North Street below the Iron Bridge. Views from the street are generally well contained along the alignment of streetscape, with limited and glimpsed oblique or perpendicular views to the existing Harlequins Centre and proposed development site. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens (Registered Park & Garden)

- 3.46 Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens are a Registered Park and Garden. They have a green, relaxed character which contrasts strongly with adjacent active and urbanised adjacent Character Area(s), and are elevated above the surrounding city centre providing open views to the north and west, with framed vistas between existing buildings and in particular along Northernhay Street from the War Memorial. Views become more expansive as the viewer rises in elevation moving northeast (away from the site). Features of conservation and cultural interest in the surrounding area are readily visible. Oblique views of the site occur in the north-western part of the gardens, but are limited to glimpsed and filtered views from the avenue below the War Memorial and Rougemont Gardens. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Exe Street & St Bartholomew's Cemetery

- 3.47 Exe Street and St Bartholomew's Cemetery are located in a valley SW of the site, linking the city centre to the River Exe to the southwest. The existing Harlequins Centre buildings are largely hidden by existing buildings along Exe Street & Napier Terrace which step up the hill towards Bartholomew Street, which comprise a mix of 2-3 storey historic and modern residential properties. The Iron Bridge & Lower North Street terminate the northern edge of this area. St Bartholomew's Cemetery is a green space with significant mature trees running along the south-eastern side of Exe Street. This viewpoint is within St David's Conservation Area. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Guildhall Shopping Centre & Car Park

- 3.48 The Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park is a larger scale building comprising a monolithic structure along its western and southern edges, with modern materials with few active street frontages that contrast with surrounding finer grained and more historic parts of the city centre. The car park access ramp links the Harlequins Centre site to the Guildhall Car Park across Paul Street at a high level. The Guildhall Centre represents a coarse insertion into the surrounding finer urban grain with limited visual and spatial permeability. Views from the adjacent public realm highly contained due to proximity and scale of adjacent built form. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Low** Townscape Sensitivity.

Paul Street

- 3.49 Paul Street is currently a canyon like space dominated by adjacent large scale retail and commercial buildings with largely blank facades. The street falls from the northeast to the southwest. Trees and/or vegetation are restricted to curtilage of public car park located at southwestern end which provide some visual contrast. There is significant vehicular movement and associated activity, and the street is currently dominated by the vehicular movement areas, with narrow pavements. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Low** Townscape Sensitivity.

Bartholomew Street West

- 3.50 Bartholomew Street West comprises a mix of land uses including retail, pub/restaurant, parking, student accommodation and small scale commercial & leisure uses. There is some variation in streetscape curtilage including active frontages, soft landscaped margins and areas of public open space. The street rises up to the southwest from the junction with Paul Street, Iron Bridge and North Street creating an elevated view to the NE towards the City Centre, with views along Paul Street to RAMM and the Phoenix, which is partially hidden behind the existing pedestrian bridge. More expansive views to the west are also locally available across St Bartholomew's Cemetery, seasonally filtered by the adjacent trees and vegetation. There is a moderate level of pedestrian movement from adjacent areas into the

city centre and to St David's, and vehicular movement passing through the area and accessing the car parks. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

City Wall

- 3.51 This linear space follows the City Wall from the junction with North Street in the south to Maddock's Row. A public footpath follows the eastern side of the wall, rising up from southwest to northeast. Views are well contained at southwestern end, but becoming locally more open at the north-eastern end of the footpath. The area is dominated by the Harlequins Centre loading bay, with blank frontages, bins & vehicular space dominating the area and creating a poor setting for the historic city wall. Trees and vegetation confined to curtilage of the small public car park. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity.

Harlequins Centre Site

- 3.52 The Harlequins Shopping Centre comprises a large built form which present largely blank facades and inactive frontages to Paul Street, the City Wall and surrounding spaces. The existing buildings and spaces are identified as having a negative contribution to the character of the Conservation Area in the Central CAAMP, and create poor quality pedestrian spaces. This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity.

Visual Baseline Appraisal

- 3.53 The visual appraisal was carried out between November 2018 and September 2019 in accordance with the methodology set out in **Appendix 1**. The appraisals were undertaken during sunny periods with good visibility.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 3.54 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was carried out and verified during the visual appraisal to take into account the localised screening effect of topography, intervening vegetation and built form. The ZTV (**Figure 2**) highlights the extent at which the proposed Harlequins shopping Centre development would be seen if there were no physical obstructions (buildings and trees). The urban context of much of the ZTV area means many of the theoretical views highlighted in the ZTV are likely to be blocked by existing built form and vegetation.
- 3.55 The ZTV was generated by importing the Digital Terrain Model into a GIS platform and used a visibility analysis tool to determine the theoretical viewshed for the proposed development. The resulting graphic highlights areas where the proposed units could theoretically be seen from the surrounding landscape at an eye level height of 1.6m. The visibility analysis was used to influence viewpoint selection, however localised sections of LIDAR data at the edge of the study area were unavailable (highlighted on the diagram with black lines), resulting in further on site investigation of the terrain and OS contour information to determine the final viewpoints. Representative viewpoints (3 and 5) were taken from the higher ground within the ZTV adjacent to the area of missing data to demonstrate the potential visibility of the site in these areas.
- 3.56 The Harlequins Shopping Centre is situated on the eastern slopes of the Exe valley, with land rising Pennsylvania and Exeter University, blocking many views from the east of Exeter. As a result, the ZTV is mainly focused to the west of the City Centre and includes the hillsides to the west of the River Exe. Views beyond the city centre to the west are predominantly constrained by the hill range between St Thomas and Nadder Brook (Alphington / Whitestone Valley Park), whilst views to the north are constrained by the hills behind Exwick and around Duryard Valley Park (Stoke hill).
- 3.57 Distant views from higher ground (Haldon Hill) to the southwest of the site beyond Ide are indicated in the ZTV. Views from this area would be seen against a backdrop of existing buildings within the city centre. At a local level, visibility of the site is typically restricted by variations in elevation and intervening built form, as might be expected within an urbanised context.
- 3.58 Views are locally restricted by existing built form within the city centre, and are generally seen against the backdrop of existing buildings, structures and trees within the city centre, as might be expected within an urban location. At a local level, the existing Guildhall Shopping Centre prevents any inter-visibility of the site from the southeast beyond Paul Street on the site boundary.

- 3.59 From the northeast, existing 19th century buildings within the site bound Queen Street and are directly visible from the adjacent public realm. The newer part of the existing development bounding Paul Street is also locally visible at the junction with Queen Street, and Queen Street at Northernhay Gate/Central Station, viewed across the Rougemont Hotel car park.
- 3.60 From the northwest, the site is locally visible from Iron Bridge and Northernhay Street where combinations of elevation and gaps within built form coincide to allow some inter-visibility.
- 3.61 From the southwest, the site is visible along the vista from Bartholomew Street East although softened by existing trees within the public car park at the southwestern end of the site.

Visual Sensitivity

- 3.62 Our methodology, supported by our appraisal of the study area has enabled the identification of a number of key visual receptors. These include:

Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity Value
Pedestrian Users of Public Gardens/Historic Spaces (such as Northernhay Gardens, Cathedral Green), Pedestrians using rural footpaths, Residential Properties,	High
Pedestrian Users of Streets and Public Rights of Way within the city centre, cyclists and users of public transport, users Sports and Recreational Facilities, cyclists and users of public transport	Medium
People in Work places, Vehicle Drivers	Low

- 3.59 A total of 42 viewpoints have been identified to provide representative views from key receptors identified within the ZTV. The selected viewpoints were agreed in collaboration with Exeter City Council Officers and Historic England, and reviewed as a result of feedback from the public consultation and discussions with the consultant team.
- 3.60 A description of each of these viewpoints is provided in the Visual Assessment Table at Appendix 3 to record the visual baseline conditions and the potential visual effects of the proposals, and a summary description of these are grouped into key areas/receptors below. The locations of the viewpoints are shown on Figures 2.1 and 2.2 and Photographic viewpoints are recorded in Figures 6.1 – 6.46.

Distant Viewpoints

- 3.61 In views from higher ground within **Exwick & St Thomas** (viewpoints 3 & 5), and the rising land towards the west of the City, the city centre is seen on rising ground with Exeter College, St David's Church (Hele Road), the Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Michaels, Mount Dinham forming distinctive landmarks on the skyline. Some of these views have historic value and are recorded in early paintings and etchings of the city, with the

Cathedral towers standing out above the city within a more rural context. Existing buildings around the site including the Rougemont Hotel and Guildhall Car Park are visible, with hills in East Devon in the distance behind. These views are from public footpaths and quiet rural roads (in the rising ground to the west) or from residential streets within Exwick and Pennsylvania, and are assessed as having **High-Medium** sensitivity.

- 3.62 In views from the higher parts of **Exeter University** and higher ground within **Duryard, Hoopern & Pennsylvania** (viewpoint 10) the site is glimpsed within the city centre, often with student halls and university buildings in the immediate context. The Cathedral may be seen as a landmark within the city centre, with an open or partial view to the wider Exe Valley and Haldon ridge to the south. Whilst some viewpoints, such as Higher Hoopern Lane, have a more quiet suburban-rural character, the site is seen in the context of the city its constituent buildings and structures. These views are from public footpaths and residential streets, or from the University grounds and accommodation, and are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity.
- 3.63 Views from within the **Riverside Valley Park** (viewpoints 1 & 2) are assessed as having **High** sensitivity, but are largely screened by intervening landform, buildings and vegetation within and around the city centre and are therefore not assessed further in the LVIA.
- 3.64 In views from lower parts of **St Thomas/Exwick** (viewpoints 4 & 8) there are glimpsed views of the upper parts of the proposed development above existing buildings, vegetation and landform on the western edge of the city centre, which screen lower parts of the site. Exeter College, St David's Church (Hele Road), St Michaels, Mount Dinham and the Cathedral Church of St Peter form distinctive landmarks in some views. These views are from residential and busy streets, or from locally higher areas such as St Thomas Station, and are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity.

City Centre Viewpoints

- 3.63 In views from **Hele Road & Bury Meadow Park** (viewpoints 11, 12 & 24) within St David's Conservation Area the site is obscured by landform and existing building. These viewpoints are therefore not assessed further in the LVIA.
- 3.64 **Queen Street** (viewpoints 25-30, 36 & 42) is a linear space with an urban character that is largely enclosed by a variety of three storey traditional buildings and associated materials. The street is busy with high numbers of pedestrians (from Exeter College, the University and Central Station, as well as residents, workers, shoppers and visitors), along with cyclists, vehicular movement and associated activity. The viewpoints demonstrate a sequential series of views along the broadly level street, terminated by the High Street and Cathedral Towers to the south-east. There are no residential properties and views of the site are limited to two parts of the street, from Northernhay Gate and the eastern part of Central Station forecourt and from the junction at the top of Paul Street. Elsewhere views of the street are screened by intervening buildings. Queen Street is assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity due to the bustling urban character of the street.

- 3.65 **Cathedral Yard** (viewpoint 35) is a key space within the city centre, forming the setting for the Cathedral Church of St Peter and retaining much of its historic character. Views of the site are screened by existing buildings on the north-western edge of the space and existing buildings on the High Street. This viewpoint is therefore not assessed further in the LVIA.
- 3.66 Views from within **Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens**, a Registered Park & Garden, are assessed as having a **High** sensitivity due to the peaceful, green character of the gardens which are elevated above the surrounding streets and railway. There are important views of the wide landscape to the north and west of the city, including the view south-west of the War Memorial which is lined by an avenue of Liquidamber trees and aligns with Northernhay Street to frame views of the hills to the west. Views of the site itself are limited to a few specific locations by intervening landform, buildings and mature trees (viewpoints 33, 34 & 41) and the site itself is seen in the context of other buildings of similar scale (such as the Rougemont Hotel, Exeter College buildings and student accommodation at the north-western end of Queen Street).
- 3.67 Views of the site from **Exe Street & St Bartholomew Cemetery** (viewpoints 13 & 14) are limited by mature trees within the cemetery and by existing buildings on Exe Street, by Napier Terrace which steps up the hill to Northgate and by existing buildings on Lower North Street & Northgate itself. The Iron Bridge is visible at the northern end of Exe Street. This views are assessed as having **High** sensitivity due to the quiet residential character of the street and the cemetery itself.
- 3.68 Although raised above Exe Street views of the proposed development site from **Mount Dinham** (viewpoints 15 & 16) are limited to the eastern edge of the area by the existing cottages to the south of St Michael's church. The existing Harlequins Centre buildings and the upper parts of the City Gate Hotel are visible from the eastern edge of this area. These views are assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity due to the existing open views to major city centre structures such as the Guildhall Car Park which is a dominant negative feature in the view.
- 3.69 **St David's Hill & Iron Bridge** are a key historic route into the city centre and an important feature within St David's Conservation Area (viewpoints 17-20, 39 & 40). These viewpoints demonstrate a sequential series of views which pedestrians gain as they pass along the street from north to south, dipping down to the Iron Bridge and then rising with the view terminated by the Guildhall shopping centre and North Street. This route is a busy through route for vehicles to cross the city centre, and is lined by a mix of residential, community and commercial properties; predominately historic and in keeping with the character of the area. Views of the proposed development will be partially screened by existing buildings and structures, and will be seen in the context of the Guildhall Car Park which forms a solid wall to the skyline, broken only by the upper parts of the Cathedral Towers visible to the south-east, and are assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity due to the close proximity of major city centre structures.
- 3.70 **Northernhay Street & Maddocks Row** (viewpoints 38 & 43-46) comprises a street of historic and largely residential properties which is located below the City Wall immediately

to the north west of the site. Despite its close proximity to the city centre Northernhay Street retains its historic character, and provides a quiet pedestrian and cycle route which links Queen Street to Exe Street and the River Exe to the west. Views up and down the street retain their character, and are largely enclosed by existing residential properties. There are oblique and perpendicular views at Maddock's Row & Northernhay Place, between existing buildings and at the gateway to the private car park where the proposed development will be clearly visible. Due to their quiet, historic and residential character these views are assessed as having **High** sensitivity.

- 3.71 **Bartholomew St** (viewpoints 22 & 23) is located within the city centre to the south-west of the site, on the one-way vehicular route linking South Street and North Street and providing access to Mary Arches and Guildhall Car Parks. The southern end of the street is quieter with a small green space above St Bartholomew Cemetery and a more peaceful, historic character. The street is relatively wide, with some landscaping along the northern edge and an open view to the proposed development site that is partially screened by existing deciduous trees in the southern part of the site. The existing footbridge crossing Paul Street partially blocks views of the Exeter Phoenix Art's centre to the north, which terminates the vista (with mature trees in Rougemont Gardens behind), and the existing Guildhall car park building is visible on the eastern side of Paul Street. These views are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity due to their close proximity to the existing large city centre structures and busy vehicular movements.
- 3.72 **Paul St** (viewpoints 23 & 28) runs along the eastern edge of the development site between the Harlequins Centre and the Guildhall Shopping Centre. The canyonlike character of the space, dominated by the road, with blank frontages and with narrow pavements, makes it unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. Views from within this area are therefore assessed as having **Low** sensitivity, with a **Medium** sensitivity from Queen Street and Northgate looking into Paul Street.
- 3.73 The **City Wall** (viewpoint 47) forms the western boundary of the development site, retaining the edge of the site and dropping down to residential properties on Northernhay Street below. Currently pedestrians using this route have a poor experience as the view is dominated by the rear of the Harlequin Centre and its service area and is a poor quality pedestrian environment, with the narrow footway running along the edge of the city wall. The upper parts of houses on Northernhay Street are seen above the City Wall, and there is a framed view of the hills to the west of Exeter. Due to its existing poor context views within this area are assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity.

4 Description of Proposals

- 3.1 The development proposals will include the demolition of existing Harlequins Shopping Centre and pedestrian bridge over Paul Street and making good of the façade of the Guildhall Centre, following removal of the pedestrian bridge.
- 3.2 The scheme will retain the retail/commercial frontage and deliver the refurbishment of the upper floors of 21-22 Queen Street to provide co-living accommodation and enhance activity to the Queen Street frontage.
- 3.3 Two new blocks accommodating up to 300 co-living bedrooms and associated amenity areas, and a hotel with up to 120 bedrooms and associated space including bar and restaurant will be developed on the area south of Queen Street. Proposed building heights will be a maximum of 8 Floors comprising Lower Ground, Upper Ground and maximum 6 floors above in response to the city centre location and urban context.
- 3.4 A car park with up to 45 spaces is provided beneath the southern block, and the existing Guildhall Car Park access ramp is retained, with access from Paul Street.
- 3.5 A high quality series of open spaces is proposed, linking Paul Street to the City Wall and enhancing pedestrian connectivity to and around the site. The landscape scheme includes an interactive display space for the interpretation of the heritage of the site and surroundings and an exciting hard and soft landscape scheme.
- 3.6 The public realm to Paul Street and Queen Street will be enhanced to reduce the dominance of the highway and improve the pedestrian environment, as well as enhancing the character of this part of the city centre.

5 Proposed Mitigation and Enhancements

- 5.1 A number of mitigation measures have been developed to respond to issues identified through the baseline landscape and visual appraisal and these have informed the proposals. The proposed mitigation measures include:
- 5.2 The scale and massing of the proposed development has been carefully modelled to respond to the topography of the site, existing and contextual site features and views to identified landmarks – notably the Cathedral Church of St Peter – ensuring that the proposed development does not interfere with key views of the Cathedral’s Towers.
- 5.3 The design of the proposed buildings has responded to the existing built context, the character of the wider Central Conservation Area and the adjacent St. David’s Conservation Area (including a number of Listed buildings). The proposed architectural design, which is described fully in the Design and Access Statement, will result in a high quality contemporary built form which is appropriate to its context, responds to the site constraints and opportunities and contributes positively to the character of the city centre, High quality materials and detailing will ensure the building responds positively to its context and is an attractive addition to the area and the wide city centre.
- 5.4 The overall height of the proposed development has been reduced during the design development process in response to the assessed inter-visibility with the wider landscape.
- 5.5 The inherent topography of the site has been creatively used to ensure that the proposed development steps up the site and provide vehicular access from Paul Street to the basement parking areas below Block 2, minimising any sterile frontages to the key eastern and western elevations. The impact of new built form has been reduced by breaking up the mass of built form into two buildings (Block 1 and Block 2).
- 5.6 Public realm enhancement at the key pedestrian node at the corner of Paul Street and Queen Street will be enhanced through the reduction in carriageway widths, removal of clutter and enhancement to surface materials. The townscape character of Paul Street will be enhanced increased pavement widths using high quality granite paving and introduction of new soft landscape elements. The proposed development will introduce a human-scale to the Paul Street elevation. This will include the provision of new active frontages and improved visual and spatial connectivity with the City Wall and Maddocks Row beyond.
- 5.7 The Paul Street elevation will be punctuated by a new area of public open space comprising the urban oasis garden between Blocks 1 and 2. This will include high quality paving materials including contrasting smooth ground paving slabs alternating with textured bands of flamed red/pink setts. The design provides a visual link with both the materials used in the proposed development facades, the paving used in the adjacent pavement areas of Paul Street and the breccia stone used in the City Walls.
- 5.8 The experience and connectivity of the pedestrian link adjacent the city wall will be improved by increasing the building set back, enhancing connections to Paul Street, the removal of vehicular access and the introduction of new hard and soft landscape finishes.

The scale and tone of the brick pavers used through this link will reflect the traditional stone used in the adjacent city wall.

- 5.9 Existing semi-mature trees adjacent to the site boundary with Paul Street will be retained, and enhanced through the creation of a new pocket park in this location. These trees provide a visual contrast with, and filter views of the adjacent built form and will be supplemented with additional planting.
- 5.10 The colour and texture of raised planters within the Urban Oasis Garden has been selected to provide a visual and aesthetic link with the City Wall. Seating will also be integrated into the planters to encourage meeting and social interaction within the space. The raised planted areas will guide pedestrian movement and also allow planting to be provided within podium areas over basement car parking below.
- 5.11 New tree and shrub planting will take advantage of the uniquely sheltered microclimate and shading created by the existing car park ramp and adjacent proposed development structures which over sail parts of the space. Strong, architectural planting will create a lush 'oasis' environment within the heart of the development including vertical greening. The biophilic design will create a restorative space within the noise and activity of the city centre, and enhance the ecological value of the site. The built form and focal areas of planting will be creatively illuminated to energise the character and encourage use of the space during periods of darkness.

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6 Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

- 6.1 The following section summarises the assessment of the potential residual landscape and visual effects that the proposals may have upon the existing landscape & townscape character and visual receptors identified within the baseline appraisal.
- 6.2 Visualisations of the proposed development from the identified viewpoints (See Figures 6.1 - 6.47) have been used to inform the assessment of the landscape and visual effects. The illustrative visualisations have been prepared in accordance with the methodology set out in Appendix 2 and should be viewed in conjunction with the submitted application drawings and Design and Access Statement.
- 6.3 The landscape and visual effects have been assessed against the baseline study and the proposed development, taking into account the proposed mitigation measures described above, which are integral to the design and form part of the planning application. Judgements regarding the estimated scale, magnitude and significance that any of the remaining residual effects are likely to have, are based upon the methodology outlined in Appendix 1.

Potential Effects on Designated Landscapes

- 6.4 Where there is visual connectivity the proposals are distant and seen in the context of the city centre and are therefore assessed as having a negligible effect upon statutory landscape designations within the study area. The high value landscape receptors of the Stoke woods SSSI and the RAMSAR site on the Exe estuary are over 2.5km and 4.5km away with no visibility with the development site due to topography and existing vegetation and it therefore has no effects on these designated landscapes.

Potential Effects on Heritage Assets

- 6.5 As has been already noted a separate Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken and therefore the LVIA does not include an assessment of the potential Heritage Impact of the proposals on individual Conservation Areas, Listed Building's, Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks & Gardens. The LVIA does consider the effect of the development on the townscape character of the relevant Conservation Areas and Townscape Character of which these are constituent parts.
- 6.6 **Central Conservation Area** is considered to have a **Medium** Sensitivity to change in character. The proposed development will replace the negative Harlequins Centre, which creates a poor quality frontage to Paul Street and the City Wall with a high quality mixed use development with active frontages, human scale and public spaces that enhance the setting of these spaces - improving the quality of the townscape in these areas. Views along the City Wall and to the north will be enhanced through the creation of a series of high quality public spaces that create an accessible environment following the wall and better connectivity between Maddocks Row and Paul Street. The proposed development will also reduce the canyon like character of Paul Street which is identified as a negative space in the

Central Conservation Area Appraisal - and provide a positive foil against the backdrop of the monolithic western facade of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park. From Bartholomew Street to the south west of the site the proposed development will increase the scale of the development on the site, but will provide a higher quality built form, reduce the canyon like appearance of Paul Street and remove the pedestrian bridge - enhancing views up Paul St to RAMM and The Phoenix. The proposed development is therefore assessed as having a potential high magnitude of change, and a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** effect on Paul Street and the adjacent area of Queen Street and the City Wall, and a negligible change and Neutral effect on the wider Central Conservation Area.

- 6.7 **St David's Conservation Area** is also considered to have a **Medium** Sensitivity to change in character. Although a significant development the proposed development will have a small and localised impact on the overall character of St David's Conservation Area, largely restricted to the immediate townscape and streets as described below. A thorough design and visualisation process has been undertaken (and is described in the D&A) to ensure that the massing of the development does not interfere with key views of important landmarks such as the Cathedral Church of St Peter from St David's Conservation Area. The proposed development will replace the negative Harlequins Centre with a high quality mixed use development with active frontages, human scale and public spaces that helps to provide a better quality eastern edge to the Conservation Area. Better connectivity between Maddocks Row and Paul Street is created providing an accessible route along the City Wall from Queen Street to Northgate. The proposed development increases the scale of development in relation to Northernhay Street, which includes a number of Listed Buildings and residential properties. Views along Northernhay Street (which runs NE-SW) are largely unaffected, but oblique views (such as through the car park gateway and from Northernhay Place) and gaps in the building frontages provide partial views of the development which is larger in scale than the buildings within this part of the City Centre. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major-Moderate Adverse** effect on the townscape character of the localised part of the Conservation Area at Northernhay Street, and a negligible change and Neutral effect on the wider character of St David's Conservation Area.

- 6.8 The potential effect of the proposed development on the character of the Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens Registered Park & Garden and the setting of the City Wall (Scheduled Ancient Monument) where it passes through the site is considered in the Townscape Character Assessment below.

Potential Effects on Landscape Character

- 6.9 As has been already noted because the proposed development is wholly within Exeter City Centre and is similar in scale to surrounding buildings it is considered that the proposed development will have a negligible effect on National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands or National Character Area 149: The Culm.

Exeter City Centre

- 6.10 Although a significant development the proposed development will have a small and localised impact on the overall character of the city centre, largely restricted to the immediate townscape and streets in the Townscape Character Appraisal below. A thorough design and visualisation process has been undertaken (and is described in the section 5 above and the Design & Access Statement) to ensure that the massing of the development does not interfere with key views of important landmarks such as the Cathedral Church of St Peter.
- 6.11 The scheme will replace the existing Harlequins Centre, which creates a poor quality frontage to Paul Street and the City Wall with a high quality mixed use development with active frontages, human scale and public spaces that enhance the setting of these spaces - improving the quality of the townscape in these areas. The proposed development will also reduce the canyon like character of Paul Street which is identified as a negative space in the Central Conservation Area Appraisal - and provide a positive foil against the backdrop of the monolithic western facade of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major Positive** effect on the character of Paul Street and the adjacent area of Queen Street, and a negligible change and **Neutral** effect on the character of the rest of the City Centre.

Exeter Slopes & Hills - Devon Character Area

- 6.11 The proposed development is within Exeter City Centre and where visible from the Exeter Slopes & Hills character area will be perceived as a small element within the city centre, similar in scale to existing built forms and with an articulated elevational treatment and roofscape that breaks up the massing of the structure - providing enhancement to the city centre when seen against the backdrop of the Guildhall and Mary Arches car parks. The development is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and a **neutral** effect on this character area

Potential Effects upon Townscape Character

- 6.12 The assessment of the potential effect of the proposed development on each Townscape Character area (as shown in Figure 5) is set out below.

Queen Street

- 6.13 The proposed development is largely hidden by existing buildings on the southern side of Queen Street, which as a linear spaces focuses views along the street towards the High Street and Cathedral and is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity. There will be views of the site from 2 locations, across the Rougemont Hotel car park from Central Station/Northernhay Gate and looking north-west at the junction with Paul Street. From Central Station the proposed development will be visible above the existing buildings, but will be similar in scale to adjacent buildings (such as the Rougemont Hotel) and be of high architectural quality with detailed human scale fenestration that will not be out of character with the Conservation Area. From Paul Street the open view of the development will be a significant improvement to the streetscape, replacing the poor quality blank

facades of the existing shopping centre with active frontages, an improved public realm and new spaces that link through to the City Wall. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major Beneficial** effect on the character of the Queen Street.

Exeter College & Rougemont Hotel

- 6.14 There is little interaction between the majority of this area, which is assessed as having Medium townscape sensitivity, and the site due to intervening buildings. The main view is across the Rougemont Hotel car park, where the proposed development is seen in the context of other city centre buildings of a similar scale and use. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and a **Neutral** effect on this character area.

Iron Bridge Street & St David's Hill

- 6.15 The proposed development will have a small and localised impact on this area, which is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity. A thorough design and visualisation process has been undertaken (and is described in the D&A) to ensure that the massing of the development does not interfere with key views of important landmarks such as the Cathedral Church of St Peter. There are glimpsed partial views of the southern part of the development from St David's Hill and in a tight oblique view from the Iron Bridge at the southern end of Northernhay Street. Looking up Northernhay Street however the view is screened by intervening buildings. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and a **Neutral** effect on this character area.

Northernhay Street

- 6.16 The proposed development increases the scale of development in relation to Northernhay Street, which is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity. Views along Northernhay Street (which runs NE-SW) are largely unaffected, but oblique views (such as through the car park gateway and from Northernhay Place) and gaps in the building frontages provide partial views of the development which is significantly larger in scale and contrast in character than the buildings within Northernhay Street, although they would be perceived to be part of the city centre townscape. Better connectivity between Maddocks Row and Paul Street is created - providing an accessible route along the City Wall from Queen Street to Northgate. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major Adverse** effect on the character of Northernhay Street as previously described in the St David's Conservation Area assessment.

Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens (Registered Park & Garden)

- 6.17 The proposed development will have a small and localised impact on this area, which is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity. The development will have limited intervisibility and will be seen in glimpsed and partial views from limited parts of the

gardens. Key views to the wider landscape to the north and along Northernhay Street to the hills to the west are unaffected, and where visible the proposed development is similar in scale to and seen in the context of existing city centre buildings such as the Rougemont Hotel and Exeter College buildings and is therefore not considered to be out of character with townscape surrounding the gardens. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and a **Neutral** effect on this character area.

Exe Street & St Bartholomew's Cemetery

- 6.18 This character area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity. The upper parts of the southern part of the proposed development are glimpsed above Napier Terrace from parts of this area, whilst views from further south along Exe Street are largely obscured by existing mature trees. The small elements that are visible will be contiguous with the existing built form and will represent a minor element in any views - and appropriate to this edge of centre character area. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and a **Neutral** effect on this character area.

Guildhall Shopping Centre & Car Park

- 6.19 The Guildhall Centre presents a blank façade to Paul Street, with views limited to those from the upper deck of the car park only and the main public spaces facing onto Queen Street and internally into shopping centre itself, and is assessed as having a Low Townscape sensitivity. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a negligible magnitude of change and **Neutral** effect on this character area.

Paul Street

- 6.20 This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Low** Townscape Sensitivity. The scheme will replace the existing Harlequins Centre, which creates a poor quality frontage to Paul Street and the City Wall with a high quality mixed use development with active frontages, human scale and public spaces that enhance the setting of these spaces - improving the quality of the townscape in these areas. The proposed development will also reduce the canyon like character of Paul Street which is identified as a negative space in the Central Conservation Area Appraisal - and provide a positive foil against the backdrop of the monolithic western facade of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Moderate Beneficial** effect on the character of Paul Street.

Bartholomew Street West

- 6.21 This townscape character area is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity. The development provides new buildings to the western side of Paul street which are of a larger scale than the existing buildings and represent a significant element in the view. Although the development increases the amount of built form on the skyline it provides an appropriate scale for the city centre setting, creates better active frontages to the street

and helps to reinforce the vista along Paul Street. The removal of the pedestrian footbridge crossing Paul Street opens views towards the Exeter Phoenix Art's Centre leading towards an overall improvement of the vista. Existing deciduous trees are retained to continue to filter views of the development. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a medium magnitude of change and a **Moderate Beneficial** effect on the character of Bartholomew Street West.

City Wall

- 6.22 The character of this area is assessed as having a **High** Townscape Sensitivity and will change significantly with the redevelopment of the Harlequins Centre - resulting in a high quality pedestrian space running along the City Wall, with new paving materials, lighting and planting enhancing the character of the space. The proposed development is set back from the wall and will continue to frame the view south along the wall and to the wider landscape to the west. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major Beneficial** effect on the character of the City Wall.

Harlequins Centre Site

- 6.23 This townscape character area. The scheme will replace the existing Harlequins Centre, which is assessed as having a **Medium** Townscape Sensitivity and creates a poor quality frontage to Paul Street and the City Wall with a high quality mixed use development with active frontages, human scale and public spaces that enhance the setting of these spaces - improving the quality of the townscape in these areas. The proposed development will also reduce the canyon like character of Paul Street which is identified as a negative space in the Central Conservation Area Appraisal - and provide a positive foil against the backdrop of the monolithic western facade of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and Car Park. The scheme is therefore assessed as having a high magnitude of change and a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** effect on the character of the Harlequins Centre Site.

Potential Visual Effects

- 6.24 The visual appraisal identified a number of representative key views which have been grouped into key areas/groups of receptors. The potential visual effect on each group has been described, taking into account the detailed proposals, the proposed mitigation measures and the illustrative visualisations, and assessed below.
- 6.25 For each group, the category of the visual receptor(s) is identified and the potential effect (magnitude of change) is assessed against the receptor sensitivity to determine the potential significance of the effect on each receptor. The visual effect has been assessed at Year 1 only as the development is proposed to be completed in one phase, and the potential effect of the proposed planting and landscape areas is likely to result in a minimal change on the visual effect to each receptor.

Potential Effects during Construction

- 6.26 The proposed development is proposed to be delivered over a single construction phase which will proceed over a 2 year time span (approximately). During this period the potential effects of the construction of the site will vary from those identified below, and will include site hoardings, scaffolding, cranes and disruption to the streetscape which will have a potentially greater impact on near viewpoints and the immediate area surrounding the site.
- 6.27 Due to the short period the visual effects of the construction works have therefore not been separately assessed in the LVIA.

Distant Viewpoints

- 6.28 In views from higher ground within **Exwick & St Thomas** (viewpoints 3 & 5), and the rising land towards the west of the City. These views are from public footpaths and quiet rural roads (in the rising ground to the west) or from residential streets within Exwick and Pennsylvania, and are assessed as having **High-Medium** sensitivity. The scale and massing of the proposed development has been carefully considered to avoid interfering with views of key landmarks such as the Cathedral and St Michael's Church, Mount Dinham. Existing buildings, structures and trees within St David's partially obscure views of the proposed development, and the proposed buildings sit below the distant skyline of the hills in East Devon. From these views the proposed development represents a small element in the view and will be seen in the context of existing city centre buildings such as the Rougemont Hotel and Exeter College and is assessed as having a **Low-Negligible** magnitude of change, with a resulting effect of **Moderate-Minor Adverse to Neutral**
- 6.29 In views from the higher parts of **Exeter University** and higher ground within **Duryard, Hoopern & Pennsylvania** (viewpoint 10) the site is glimpsed within the city centre, often with student halls and university buildings in the immediate context to the viewer. These views are from public footpaths and residential streets, or from the University grounds and accommodation, and are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity. The upper parts of the

proposed development will be partially seen as a small element in the view above the existing buildings within the city centre and partially screened by student accommodation, buildings and trees within and around the university. The magnitude of change is assessed as **Low** where visible, and **Negligible** where screened by intervening buildings and vegetation, with a resulting effect of **Minor Adverse** to **Neutral**.

- 6.30 Views from within the **Riverside Valley Park** (viewpoints 1 & 2) are assessed as having **High** sensitivity, and are largely screened by intervening landform, buildings and vegetation within and around the city centre. Small elements of the upper parts of the roofs of the proposed development are glimpsed as a very small element in more distant views (view 1) and are seen in the context of the existing city centre buildings and roofscape. The magnitude of change is assessed as **Negligible**, with a resulting effect of **Neutral** in these distant views.
- 6.31 In views from lower parts of **St Thomas/Exwick** (viewpoints 4 & 8) there are glimpsed views of the upper parts of the proposed development above existing buildings, vegetation and landform on the western edge of the city centre, which screen lower parts of the site. These views are from residential and busy streets, or from locally raised public areas such as St Thomas Station, and are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity. The upper parts of the proposed development will be partially seen or glimpsed as a small element in the view against the skyline above the existing buildings, as a minor subservient element to key landmarks such as the Cathedral and St Michael's, Mount Dinham. The magnitude of change is assessed as **Low** where visible, and **Negligible** where screened by intervening buildings and vegetation, with a resulting effect of **Minor Adverse** to **Neutral**.

City Centre Viewpoints

- 6.32 In views from **Hele Road & Bury Meadow Park** (viewpoints 11, 12 & 24) within St David's Conservation Area the site is obscured by landform and existing building. These viewpoints are therefore not assessed further in the LVIA.
- 6.33 **Queen Street** (viewpoints 25-30, 36 & 42) is a linear space with an urban character that is largely enclosed by a variety of three storey traditional buildings and associated materials. The street is busy with high numbers of pedestrians (from Exeter College, the University and Central Station, as well as residents, workers, shoppers and visitors), along with cyclists, vehicular movement and associated activity. Queen Street is assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity due to the bustling city-centre character of the street. The photographic appraisal includes a series of sequential views along the broadly level street, to demonstrate the changing character of the street and views of the site. Views of the site are limited to two areas, from Northernhay Gate and the eastern part of Central Station forecourt and from the junction at the top of Paul Street.
- 6.34 The proposals are openly visible along the western side of **Paul Street** and introduce taller form, which provides more effective containment to Paul Street, replacing the poor quality existing Harlequins Centre with its blank facades and poor urban scale. The new development is viewed as a similar scale to the existing Guildhall Centre on the eastern side

of the street, which relates more effectively to its city centre location. Active frontages are visible at street level along with improved public realm and spaces. These factors combine to result in an improvement to the vista along Paul Street. Although the built massing rises behind the existing built form to Queen Street it is perceived as an appropriate scale given its city centre location and is therefore assessed as having a **High** magnitude of change and a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** Effect on this part of Queen Street.

- 6.35 From **Northernhay Gate** part of the development is openly visible rising above the existing built form along Northernhay Street across the Rougemont Hotel car park. The new development introduces taller built form that contrasts with the historic buildings present in the foreground leading to a considerable change on the skyline. Views of the wider historic context and to Exeter Cathedral are uninterrupted. Although the high architectural quality and built form is appropriate to the city centre location and relates to other structures in the immediate context such as the Rougemont Hotel the introduction of the new built form is seen against the skyline and above the existing historic buildings and is therefore assessed as having a **High-Medium** magnitude of change, and therefore a **Major-Moderate Adverse** effect on this specific part of Queen Street.

- 6.36 Elsewhere views of the development from **Queen Street** are screened by intervening buildings and is therefore assessed as having **No Effect**.

- 6.37 **Cathedral Yard** (viewpoint 35) is a key space within the city centre, forming the setting for the Cathedral Church of St Peter and retaining much of its historic character. Views of the site are screened by existing buildings on the north-western edge of the space and existing buildings on the High Street. This viewpoint is therefore not assessed further in the LVIA.

- 6.38 Views from within **Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens**, a Registered Park & Garden, are assessed as having a **High** sensitivity due to the peaceful, green character of the gardens which are elevated above the surrounding streets and railway. The develop is visible from parts of the gardens, where it is seen to be rising slightly above existing rooflines of properties on Queen Street (particularly during winter months when there are no leaves on the intervening trees). In the majority of the gardens the proposed development is hidden behind existing landform and buildings. Where visible the proposed development will be seen in the context of other buildings including the Rougemont Hotel and will be of a similar character appropriate to the city centre. During the summer the proposed development is screened by the existing trees. The development does not encroach upon the framed view along the avenue to the Hills to the west of the city. On the localised views where the development is visible the magnitude of change is assessed as **Low** with a **Moderate-Low Adverse** effect in winter months, and **No Effect** on the majority of views within the gardens.

- 6.39 Views of the site from **Exe Street & St Bartholomew Cemetery** (viewpoints 13 & 14) are limited by mature trees within the cemetery and by existing buildings. These views are assessed as having **High** sensitivity due to the quiet residential character of the street and the cemetery itself. The upper parts of the southern part of the proposed development are glimpsed above Napier Terrace and Bell Court and are contiguous with the upper part of

the City Gate Hotel, representing a small element of the view which is in keeping with the city centre location of the site. Views from further south along Exe Street are largely obscured by existing mature trees. The magnitude of change is therefore assessed as **Low - Negligible**, with a **Moderate-Minor Adverse** to **Neutral** Effect.

- 6.40 Although raised above Exe Street views of the proposed development site from **Mount Dinham** (viewpoints 15 & 16) are limited to the eastern edge of the area by the existing cottages to the south of St Michael's church. These views are assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity due to the existing open views to major city centre structures such as the Guildhall Car Park which is a dominant negative feature in the view. The proposed development is clearly seen in the centre of the view in the context of the Guildhall Car Park. The magnitude of change is therefore assessed as **High** due to the open view of the proposed development which is seen against the skyline and partially obscures the glimpsed view of the RAMM and Phoenix roofs and trees in Rougemont Gardens, with a **Moderate-Minor Adverse** to **Neutral** Effect.
- 6.41 **St David's Hill & Iron Bridge** are a key historic route into the city centre and an important feature within St David's Conservation Area (viewpoints 17-20, 39 & 40). The photographic appraisal includes a series of sequential views to demonstrate the changing views of the site as the viewer passes along the street from north to south, dipping down to the Iron Bridge and then rising with the view terminated by the Guildhall shopping centre and North Street. The development has been carefully modelled to avoid potential interference with the Cathedral towers and step up the hill. Views of the proposed development will be partially screened by existing residential buildings and structures, and will be seen in the context of the Guildhall Car Park which forms a solid wall to the skyline, broken only by the upper parts of the Cathedral Towers visible to the south-east.
- 6.42 The viewpoints are assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity due to transient nature of the street and the close proximity of major city centre structures. Where visible the proposed development is seen as small element in the view, glimpsed between and above existing buildings and against the backdrop of the Guildhall Car Park and is therefore assessed as having a **Low – Negligible** magnitude of change, and a **Minor Beneficial – Neutral** Effect due to its partial screening of the Guildhall car park with a better quality architectural treatment.
- 6.43 In glimpsed views such as the oblique view from the **Iron Bridge** looking north towards the site the effect is assessed as **Minor Adverse** due to the introduction of a new element of built form in the skyline above the existing properties on Lower North Street.
- 6.44 **Northernhay Street & Maddocks Row** (viewpoints 38 & 43-46) comprises a street of historic and largely residential properties which is located below the City Wall immediately to the north west of the site. Due to their quiet, historic and residential character these views are assessed as having **High** sensitivity.

- 6.45 Views up and down the street (40, 42, 46) retain their historic character, and are largely enclosed by existing residential properties and the proposed development is assessed as having **No Effect** on these linear views.
- 6.46 Perpendicular views at Maddock's Row & Northernhay Place, and oblique views between existing buildings and at the gateway to the private car park are more significantly affected and the proposed development will be clearly visible against the sky above and between existing properties Street. The new built form introduces taller building elements within the view leading to an intensification of the urban character of the view, which whilst appropriate to the city centre location will change the character of Northernhay Street. The magnitude of change from these particular viewpoints within Northernhay Street is therefore assessed as **High**, and the potential effect as **Major Adverse**.
- 6.47 **Bartholomew St** (viewpoints 22 & 23) is located within the city centre to the south-west of the site, on the one-way vehicular route linking South Street and North Street and providing access to Mary Arches and Guildhall Car Parks. These views are assessed as having **Medium** sensitivity due to their close proximity to the existing large city centre structures and busy vehicular movements. The development provides new buildings to the western side of Paul street which are of a larger scale than the existing buildings and represent a significant element in the view. The development introduces additional built form, partially obscuring the existing mature trees in Rougemont Gardens, but the built form is appropriate in scale to the City Centre and reflects the adjacent Guildhall Shopping Centre whilst introducing a better articulated architectural form, with more active frontages and better public realm. The removal of the pedestrian footbridge crossing Paul Street creates a more open views towards the Exeter Phoenix Art's Centre leading towards an overall improvement of the vista. Existing deciduous trees are retained to continue to filter views of the lower floors of the development. The magnitude of change from Bartholomew Street is assessed as **Medium**, and the potential effect as Moderate Beneficial.
- 6.48 **Paul St** (viewpoints 23 & 28) runs along the eastern edge of the development site between the Harlequins Centre and the Guildhall Shopping Centre. The canyonlike character of the space, dominated by the road, with blank frontages and with narrow pavements, makes it unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. Views from within this area are therefore assessed as having **Low** sensitivity, with a **Medium** sensitivity from Queen Street and Northgate looking into Paul Street. The proposed development creates a significant change along the western side of Paul Street introducing a taller built form, which provides more effective containment to Paul Street. The new development is viewed as a similar scale to the existing Guildhall Centre on the eastern side of the street, which relates more effectively to its city centre location. Active frontages are visible at street level and the public realm is significantly improved. These factors combine to result in an improvement to the vista along Paul Street itself. Although the built massing rises behind the existing built form to Queen Street it is perceived as an appropriate scale given its city centre location, and overall enhances the quality and character of these views. The magnitude of change is assessed as **High**, and the potential effect to Paul Street as **Major-Moderate Beneficial**.

- 6.49 The **City Wall footpath** (viewpoint 47) forms the western boundary of the development site, retaining the edge of the site and dropping down to residential properties on Northerhay Street below. Currently pedestrians using this route have a poor experience as the view is dominated by the rear of the Harlequin Centre and its service area and this area is therefore assessed as having a **Medium** sensitivity. The view will change significantly with the redevelopment of the Harlequins Centre resulting in a high quality pedestrian space that improves the setting of the City Wall and enhances the framed views to the hills to the west. The magnitude of change is assessed as **High**, and the potential effect to views along the City Wall are therefore **Major-Moderate Beneficial**.

7 Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was undertaken to support a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of the Harlequin Centre, Exeter.
- 7.2 The proposed development site is a previously developed brownfield site within Exeter City Centre which comprises a Shopping Centre and associated service area enclosed by Paul Street to the east, existing commercial buildings along Queen Street to the north (some of which form part of the application site), the historic City Wall to the south and a small surface car park surrounded by trees adjacent to Northgate to the south.
- 7.3 The proposed development would provide an attractive, high quality mixed use development, which has a strong sense of place and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development (in keeping with the principles set out in the NPPF) through the regeneration of this brownfield site and enhancement of the character of the site and city centre.
- 7.4 The proposals for the site are derived from an assessment of the site and its context, and the needs and requirements of the proposed regeneration of the site. Careful appraisal of the scale and massing of the proposed built form has been undertaken to ensure that the proposals minimise the impact on key views of landmarks within the city centre, and the proposed architectural and landscape design, materials and details complement and enhance the character of Central Conservation Area and the City Centre.
- 7.5 The proposed development and mitigation meet the requirements of policies highlighted in section 3 of this report. The proposed development would:
- Achieve the visually attractive, high quality, sustainable development of a brownfield site in accordance with the NPPF and Local Planning Policy
 - Enhance the character of Central Conservation Area, and in particular the Harlequins site and its immediate context which are identified as negative features in the CAAMP
 - Be located in a sustainable location in the city centre, with excellent access to high quality facilities and public transport connections.
 - Create a high quality architectural design that draws on the character of existing buildings within the surrounding area and provides a new, distinctive character for the site
 - Provide high quality connected spaces that improve pedestrian links within this part of the city centre and enhance the quality of Paul Street and the City Wall
 - Provide open space and secure high quality amenity space for existing and new residents, and good quality uses for the surrounding area.

Summary of Effects on the Landscape and Historic Environment

- 7.7 Our assessment has concluded that the proposed development has a **Negligible** effect on the National Landscape Character Areas 148: Devon Redlands, and 149: The Culm, and a **Neutral** effect on the character of Exeter City Centre and the adjacent Devon Character Areas (Exeter Slopes & Hills).
- 7.8 There are a number of Statutory Landscape & Ecological designations within the study area; including County Wildlife Sites, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland, but these have an extremely limited visual inter-relationship with the proposed development site. Because of the limited visual relationship to the site to these designated areas they have not been taken forward further in the Landscape and Visual Assessment.

Heritage Assets

- 7.9 As has been already noted a separate Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken and therefore the LVIA does not include an assessment of the potential Heritage Impact of the proposals on individual Conservation Areas, Listed Building's, Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks & Gardens. The LVIA does consider the effect of the development on the townscape character of the relevant Conservation Areas and Townscape Character of which these are constituent parts.
- 7.10 The potential effect of the proposed development on the townscape character of the Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens Registered Park & Garden and the setting of the City Wall (Scheduled Ancient Monument) where it passes through the site is considered in the Townscape Character Assessment.
- 7.11 The proposed development is assessed as having a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** effect on Paul Street and the adjacent area of Queen Street and the City Wall, and a **Neutral** effect on the wider **Central Conservation Area**.
- 7.12 The scheme is assessed as a **Major-Moderate Adverse** effect on the townscape character of the localised part of St David's Conservation Area immediately adjacent to the site at Northernhay Street, and a **Neutral** effect on the wider character of **St David's Conservation Area**.

Townscape Character

- 7.13 The proposed development is assessed as having a **Major Beneficial** effect on the character of the **Queen Street** and the **City Wall**, a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** effect on the character of the **Harlequins site** and a **Moderate Beneficial** effect on the character of **Paul Street** and **Bartholomew Street West**.
- 7.14 The proposed development is assessed as having a **Neutral** effect on the character of **Iron Bridge & St David's Hill, Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens (Registered Park & Garden), Exe Street & St Bartholomew's Cemetery, and Guildhall Shopping Centre & Car Park**
- 7.15 Although views along Northernhay Street (which runs NE-SW) are largely unaffected by the proposed development, oblique views and gaps in the building frontages provide partial

views of the development which is significantly larger in scale and contrast in character than the buildings within Northernhay Street. The scheme is therefore assessed a **Major Adverse** effect on the townscape character of **Northernhay Street**.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 7.16 The visual appraisal identified a number of representative key views which have been grouped into key areas/groups of receptors.
- 7.18 The proposed development has limited views from the south and east of the site due to intervening landform and buildings. From the west and north of the site the visual envelope is generally contained by Pennsylvania/Stoke Hill to the north and by rising land to the west of Exwick/St Thomas and the Haldon Ridge line to the west.
- 7.19 From views within these areas the proposed development represents a small element in the view and will be seen in the context of existing city centre buildings such as the Rougemont Hotel and Exeter College and is generally assessed as having a **Moderate-Minor Adverse to Neutral** visual effect.
- 7.20 From within the city centre and the immediate context of the site views of the proposed development are significantly limited by intervening landform, buildings and vegetation.
- 7.21 From **Queen Street** views of the site are limited to two areas; Northernhay Gate and the eastern part of Central Station forecourt and from the junction at the top of Paul Street, and the proposed development is assessed as having a **Major-Moderate Adverse** visual effect and a **Major-Moderate Beneficial** visual effect on these respectively, and a Neutral effect on the rest of Queen Street.
- 7.22 From **Northernhay & Rougemont Gardens** Registered Park & Garden, the development is assessed as having a **Low** with a **Moderate-Low Adverse** visual effect in winter months on localised views where the site is visible, and **No Effect** on the majority of views within the gardens.
- 7.23 From **Exe Street & St Bartholomew Cemetery** and **Mount Dinham** the proposed development is assessed as having a **Moderate-Minor Adverse** visual effect where small elements of the upper parts of the site are visible and a **Neutral** effect elsewhere.
- 7.24 Where visible from **St David's Hill & Iron Bridge** the proposed development is seen as small element in the view, glimpsed between and above existing buildings and against the backdrop of the Guildhall Car Park and is therefore assessed as having a **Minor Beneficial – Neutral** visual effect due to its partial screening of the Guildhall car park with a better quality architectural treatment.
- 7.25 In limited glimpsed views such as the oblique view from the **Iron Bridge** looking north towards the site the effect is assessed as **Minor Adverse** due to the introduction of a new element of built form in the skyline above the existing properties on Lower North Street

- 7.26 Views up and down the **Northernhay Street** and are largely enclosed by existing residential properties and the proposed development is assessed as having **No Effect** on these linear views.
- 7.27 In perpendicular views at **Maddock's Row & Northernhay Place**, and oblique views between existing buildings and at the gateway to the private car park on **Northernhay Street**, the proposed development will be clearly visible against the sky above and between existing properties and the proposed development is therefore assessed as having a **Major Adverse** visual effect.
- 7.28 In views from Paul Street and Bartholomew Street the proposed development is assessed as having a s **Major-Moderate Beneficial** and **Moderate Beneficial** visual effect.
- 7.29 Views along the **City Wall** footpath along the western edge of the site are enhanced through the creation of a new high quality pedestrian space and the proposed development is therefore assessed as having a **Major-Moderate Beneficial visual effect** on these views.

Conclusion

- 7.30 The existing Harlequins Centre and surrounding spaces are identified as a negative feature in the Central Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, helping to create an unfriendly traffic dominated canyon to Paul Street and a poor quality setting for the City Wall on the western edge of the site.
- 7.31 The proposed development is in keeping with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Exeter Core Strategy and Local Planning Policy and will improve and enhance the townscape character of the City Centre, and in particular Paul Street and the immediate environs of the site, through the creation of an appropriate development with a high quality architectural and landscape design.
- 7.32 The design has been developed through an iterative and inclusive approach, engaging with key stakeholders, to mitigate against potential landscape and visual issues; including the careful massing of the scheme to protect key views of the Cathedral Towers, the retention of mature trees, and the creation of a series of positive spaces within the site and to Paul Street, significantly enhancing the pedestrian environment and setting of the City Wall.
- 7.33 In conclusion, whilst the development generates some adverse visual and landscape effects, particular in relation to Northernhay Street immediately to the west of the site, the appropriate regeneration of this important city centre site and the beneficial effects on Central Conservation area, the wider townscape and other views are considered to outweigh the limited and specific adverse effects.

Appendix 1 - LVIA Methodology

Baseline Study

The initial step in the landscape or visual assessment was to understand the existing landscape and visual resource in the vicinity of the development site; that is the baseline landscape and visual conditions. The data collected during this process formed the basis against which the magnitude and significance of the landscape and visual effects of the development was assessed.

The existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the proposed development were recorded through research, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resources as follows:

- Research/survey involving both desk and field studies to assemble basic information;
- Classification of landscape into units or groups of distinct and recognisable type and character (Character Area);
- Analysis of the Character in order to understand how it is experienced and the relative townscape and visual importance of the constituent parts.

A desk study, exploring patterns and scale of landform, land cover and built development informed our understanding of the overall landscape character of the surrounding area, provided the basis for subsequent field survey work which included the identification of landscape character areas around the development site, the likely zone of visual influence and principal viewpoints. The field survey identified and recorded specific sensitive receptors.

The assessment reviewed relevant National and Local Landscape Character Assessments, and the baseline study provides a concise description of the existing character of the site and its surrounding landscape, and the classification of the landscape into distinct character areas or types, which share common features and characteristics.

The approximate visibility of the site (preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility ZTV) was determined through desktop and survey work. Utilising Lidar data in the form of a digital terrain raster image (DTM) we could use a viewshed analysis tool to determine where the site could be seen from based purely on topography. The actual extent of visibility (Zone of Theoretical Visibility, ZTV) was checked by using a Digital Surface Model (DSM) Raster which highlighted areas where views were blocked by mature vegetation and existing buildings. This was then checked in the field to confirm these viewpoints and double check the localised screening effect of topography, intervening vegetation and built form. Following the field survey, the ZTV was graphically represented in the Visual Appraisal Plan which illustrates the views into / towards the site and identifies specific elements such as landform, buildings or vegetation which interrupt, filter or otherwise influence views. It is worth noting however that there is no surveyed data for parts of the hills alongside the west Exe valley, and whilst the majority of the site cannot be seen due to the ridgeline to the west we checked this area manually to confirm there were no missed viewpoints.

Representative viewpoints within the area surrounding the site were identified. The viewpoints used selected to demonstrate the relative visibility of the site (and existing

development on it) and its relationship with the surrounding landscape and built forms; and were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- An even spread of viewpoints within the visual envelope, and around all sides of the site.
- Locations which represent a range of near, middle and long distance views.
- Photographs from public viewpoints, i.e. from roads and public rights of way and other areas of open public access, were selected since they are the most significant in terms of the number of receptors affected.
- Views from sensitive receptors within designated landscapes.

Photographs were used to record the views from each representative viewpoint using a 50mm lens and a full frame Nikon digital camera.

The visual assessment considered groups of properties, roads, public rights of way and public open space that lie within the ZTV. (The term "properties" includes dwellings, community facilities and places of employment). The visual assessment identifies variation in visibility ranging from no view of the site to full open views. To indicate the degree of visibility of the site from any location, including from roads, railway lines, public rights of way, public open space and properties, four categories have been used:

- a) **Negligible:** truncated / curtailed / no view of the site or the site is difficult to perceive;
- b) **Partial View:** a view of part of the site, or a filtered view of the site, or a distant view where the site is perceived as a small part of the view;
- c) **Transient/Glimpsed View:** a quickly passing view of part of the site, or a fleeting view of the site when passing the site at speed, either from vehicle, public transport, or when walking/cycling; and
- d) **Open View:** a clear view of a significant proportion of the site within the wider landscape.

The final stage in the field survey was to identify and address specific sensitive receptors including landscape elements and features that may be directly affected by the development, as well as residents, visitors and other groups of viewers.

The next stage in the process was the analysis stage during which the landscape was classified into distinctive character areas or types, based on variations in landform and land cover. The classification drew upon National and Local Landscape Character Assessments whilst recognising specific local conditions. At the same time as carrying out the landscape character analysis, conclusions were drawn as to the overall sensitivity of the landscape and visual environment to the type of development envisaged. The sensitivity of the landscape to change is reflected in the degree to which the landscape is able to accommodate change without adverse effects on its character. This may be influenced by the extent of existing or new landform and/or existing vegetation or new planting. These and other factors determine the visibility of the proposed development and therefore influence the extent of its effect on the perceived character and visual amenity of the surrounding landscape.

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

Following completion of the Baseline Study the Landscape and Visual effects were assessed separately. The assessment of effects aimed to:

- Systematically identify the likely effects of a development;
- Indicate the measures proposed to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for those effects (mitigation measures);
- Estimate the magnitude of the effects;
- Provide an assessment of the nature and significance of these effects in a logical and well-reasoned fashion.

Consideration is given to the effects on completion of phase 1 to 4 which includes the completion of the IOT building and blocks A, B, C, F, G and G1. But also post phase 5 in which blocks D, D1, E, E1 and F1 are built and when the existing tower is removed so that the residual effects of the development after mitigation are identified.

Landscape Effects

These include the direct and indirect effects of a development on individual landscape elements and features as well as the effect upon the general landscape character and quality of the surrounding area. The landscape effects have been described clearly and objectively, and the extent and duration of any adverse/beneficial effects quantified, using four categories of effects:

- **High:** Where the scheme would cause a significant change to the character of the landscape.
- **Medium:** Where the scheme would cause a noticeable change to the character of the landscape.
- **Low:** Where the scheme would cause a small change to the character of the landscape.
- **Negligible:** Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible change, or no change, to the character of the landscape.

Where appropriate effects have been quantified, i.e. how many mature trees are to be lost as a result of the development proposals, and this type of factual data has the advantage of helping to put in context the degree of change that would occur.

Wider effects on landscape character and quality are less easy to predict objectively and interpretation and professional judgement has been used to identify where this may occur. A clear picture of likely effects is presented by referring back to the baseline landscape character assessment, and describing how the development may alter existing patterns of landscape elements and features.

In order to develop thresholds of significance, both the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of change must be classified for landscape receptors as follows:

Landscape/Townscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Magnitude
Important landscape/townscape components susceptible to small changes	High	Notable change in character over large area or intensive change over limited area
Moderately valued landscape/townscape tolerant of change	Medium	Moderate change in localised area
A relatively unimportant landscape/townscape tolerant of change	Low	Imperceptible change in landscape components
	Negligible	Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible change, or no change, to the character of the landscape/townscape

Visual Effects

The assessment of visual effects describes-

- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development;
- The changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptors.

The visual effect of a development on a view would depend upon a number of factors. These can be summarised as-

- a) the nature of the proposal;
- b) its siting in the landscape;
- c) its size;
- d) its detailed design; and
- e) the position from which it is viewed.

The visual assessment identifies the visual receptors (i.e. all properties or groups of properties, and users of roads and public rights of way) that are likely to be affected by the proposed development. The assessment seeks to understand the impact of the development in terms of the degree of change in the view experienced by the observer. The results are presented in a systematic form allowing an informed judgement to be made of the impact of the development proposals. In the assessment of views there is likely to be a continuum in the degree of visibility of a development from Open View to No View, and in order to assist in the description and comparison of the effect on views, simplified categories were used which considered:

- The extent of the view that would be occupied by the development (degree of visual intrusion): Full, Partial, Glimpsed etc;

- The proportion of the development or particular features that would be visible: Full, Most, Small Amount, None;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the development and whether the viewpoint would focus on the development due to proximity, or the development would form one element in a panoramic view;
- Whether the view is transient or one of a sequence of views, as from a moving vehicle or footpath.

Changes in visual amenity may arise from both built or engineered forms, and soft landscape elements of the development. Consideration has been given to the seasonal differences in effects arising from the degree of vegetative screening and/or filtering of views that would apply in summer and winter. The assessment is based upon the "worst case" situation in the winter, when there is the least leaf cover and therefore minimal vegetative screening.

Sensitivity of Receptors

The sensitivity of visual receptors in views is dependent on:

- The location and context of the viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor;
- The importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity or numbers of people affected, its appearance in guide books, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and reference to it in literature or art).

The most sensitive receptors include:

- Users of all outdoor recreation facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape;
- Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or value of views enjoyed by the community;
- Occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development proposals.

Other receptors include people engaged in outdoor sport and recreation, people travelling through or past the affected landscape in cars, on trains or other transport routes, and people at their place of work. The least sensitive receptors are likely to be people at their place of work, or engaged in similar activities whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, and who therefore may be potentially less susceptible to changes in the view.

7.10 Magnitude of Change

In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude of scale or visual change is described by reference to:

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements;

- The duration and nature of the effect, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous;
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

The magnitude of change in the view is assessed in degrees of impact as defined below:

High: Where the scheme would cause a significant change in the existing view.

Medium: Where the scheme would cause a noticeable change in the existing view.

Low: Where the scheme would cause a small change in the existing view.

Negligible: Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible change, or no change, to the existing view.

Significance of Effects

The two principal criteria determining the significance of effects are the scale or magnitude of effect, and the environmental sensitivity of the location or receptor. A higher level of significance is generally attached to large scale effects and effects on sensitive or high value receptors; thus, the small effects on highly sensitive sites can be more important than large effects on less sensitive sites. It is therefore important that a balanced and well-reasoned judgment of these two criteria is achieved.

In order to develop thresholds of significance, both the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of change are classified for visual receptors as follows:

Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	VisualAmenity Value	Magnitude
Pedestrian Users of Public Gardens/ Historic Spaces (such as Northernhay Gardens, Cathedral Green), Pedestrians using rural footpaths, Residential Properties	High	Where the scheme would cause a significant change in the existing view.
Pedestrian Users of Streets and Public Rights of Way within the city centre, cyclists and users of public transport, users of sports and recreational facilities	Medium	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable/moderate change in the existing view. Many viewers but moderate change.
People in Work places, Vehicle Drivers	Low	Where the scheme would cause a small change in the existing view.
	Negligible	Where the scheme would cause a barely perceptible change, or no change, to the existing view.

Significance of Effect

The Significance levels are determined by assessing the sensitivity and magnitude of the effect of the proposed development to determine the overall significance of the visual change:

- **Major positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) impact** - where the development would cause a significant deterioration (or improvement) to the existing environment;
- **Moderate positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) impact** - where the development would cause a noticeable deterioration (or improvement) to the existing environment;
- **Minor positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) impact** - where the development would cause a barely perceptible deterioration (or improvement) to the existing environment; and
- **Neutral/negligible** - no discernible change, deterioration or improvement to the existing environment.

Significance Thresholds

These thresholds have been determined by combining sensitivity and magnitude as set out below:

	Magnitude of Change		
Sensitivity	High	Medium	Low
High	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate
Medium	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate / Minor	Minor

Effects during Construction

It is recognised that project characteristics and hence sources of effects, would vary through time. The construction, operation, decommissioning and restoration phases of a development are characterised by quite different physical elements and activities. In the construction phase, sources of landscape and visual effects include:

- Site access and haulage routes
- Materials stockpiles and construction compounds.
- Construction equipment and plant
- Utilities, including lighting
- Protection of existing features

Mitigation

The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, reduce and where possible remedy or offset, any significant, negative (adverse) effects on the environment arising from development proposals. Mitigation is thus not solely concerned with "damage limitation", but may also consider measures that could compensate for unavoidable residual effects. Mitigation measures may be considered under two categories:

- Primary measures that intrinsically comprise part of the development design through an iterative process;
- Secondary measures designed to specifically address the remaining (residual) negative (adverse) effects of the final development proposals.

The design development process incorporated primary measures to minimise the landscape and visual impact of the development. The assessment identifies any further mitigation, such as landscape management measures, that would further offset negative (adverse) effects.

Where proposed mitigation has the potential to reduce or offset any significant, negative (adverse) effects on the environment arising from development proposals this is considered in the assessment and the potential impact after mitigation explained. The final impact may change over time, for example as planting becomes established and screens particular views of the site.

Conclusions

The conclusion summarises the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and sets out the overall outcome of the assessment, considering potential changes to the site's context or mitigation.

Appendix 2 – Methodology for the production of Illustrative Photomontages

This document summarises LHC's approach and specification for preparation of illustrative photomontages

1. Summary

LHC's methodology is compliant with relevant sections of: The Landscape Institute/IEEMA Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and the revised Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 (Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual assessment).

High resolution photographs were taken from locations within the visual envelope of the site. Viewpoints were identified during the initial site and context appraisal and reviewed during pre-application discussions with Exeter City Council.

The viewpoints for illustrative photomontages were chosen to be representative of views from within the visual envelope, and also to include a sufficient number of existing site features to enable the 3D model of the proposed development to be accurately located within the views. An accurate site survey (topographical survey produced by Centre Line Survey and a 3D Model produced by Malcolm Hollis) was used to prepare a 3D model of the proposed development and the immediate surrounding buildings, and Ordnance Survey mapping and LiDAR height data (Digital Terrain Model) were used to model the wider context. The development model was imported into the wider context model to the correct (Ordnance Survey) co-ordinates. With a known camera position, photographic and surveyed existing visible features, the development model was then aligned to the photograph.

Note: All photomontages are illustrative, with the accuracy of visual representation varying depending upon weather conditions, the original photographic images, the accuracy of the 3D model and interpretation of materials and landscape elements in the final image. Photomontages should therefore be read in conjunction with the detailed planning application drawings including the existing and proposed plans, sections and elevations.

2. Photography

For each agreed photographic viewpoint location, a series of high resolution photographs were taken with a full frame dSLR camera.

The location at which the photographs taken is recorded to allow the viewpoint to be accurately positioned in the 3D model.

2.1 Equipment Used for Photography

The following photographic equipment was used for the photography:

Full frame dSLR Nikon D610 camera with 50mm fixed lens (24mm lens used only when shooting restrictive views)

3. The Proposed Development

The 3D model of the proposed development was produced in Revit based on the topographical site survey. Accurate scale elevations and plans were produced by LHC to accompany the planning application.

A wider model of the site context was produced in a 3D modelling package using Ordnance Survey mapping and LiDAR levels information to produce an approximate landform.

Buildings immediately adjacent to the site were accurately surveyed (including eaves and ridge heights) and included in the 3D model.

The 3D model was checked for accuracy against the architectural elevations and aligned to the ordnance survey plan. The materials specified were applied to the model.

Using EXIF data from each photograph, an exact time of photography was noted and a lighting system created in the 3D model to match the theoretical sunlight conditions at that time of day.

4. Aligning the Model and the Photograph

For each photomontage the recorded viewpoint location was identified in the model and a view set up based on the ground level and height at which the photograph was taken (c1.70m above ground level).

For each view, two renders are made from the 3D model from the same 'matched' 3D camera: one render shows only existing site and contextual model and the other showing the proposed development. Both renders are matched to the photographic field of view (matching the camera and lens used) in the 3D modelling package.

Using a photo editing package, Adobe Photoshop CC, the panoramic photography, existing site and context model and proposed development are aligned. Any residual distortions in the underlying panoramic photography are also matched at this stage.

5. Visibility and Perception of the Proposed View

With the rendered proposals aligned to the photograph, aspects of the proposed development that would be obscured by existing foreground or site features are masked. This process is performed on all views.

To achieve a level of perceived photo-realism, atmospheric conditions and further lighting effects are simulated.

6. Presentation

Each existing and proposed illustrative photomontage is presented on an A3 drawing sheet with a location plan and presentation of the existing and proposed image.

Appendix 3 - Visual Assessment Table

