PROJECT SKATE

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

OCTOBER 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Report has been prepared by DevComms in review of the public engagement undertaken in support of a planning application for a proposal to regenerate land at the corner of Verney Street and Summerland Street. The site comprises the former Unit 1 nightclub on Summerland Street and the Best Tyre Auto Centre building.

Land is being assembled to enable a cohesive redevelopment of the former unit one nightclub, which closed in February 2024, and the adjacent Best Tyre Auto Centre building.

Spinnaker Estates vision is for the site is for a high-quality student accommodation, comprising 180 studio apartments alongside a wide range of amenities.

An engagement programme was developed by DevComms, which utilised a range of methods to engage with community stakeholders, in particular the local residents who live within close proximity to the development site. This included letter mailings, media releases via local media and a drop in session held at St Sidwell's Community Centre.

DevComms is a dedicated property communications consultancy which specialises in public engagement on new development proposals. DevComms has undertaken community and stakeholder engagement on behalf of Spinnaker Estates.

Spinnaker Estates is committed to engaging with the local planning authority, Exeter City Council, and the local community to ensure that all key stakeholders have had the opportunity to view and comment on the development proposals. The community was informed of the proposals and provided with project specific contact details to ask any questions and/or to provide any feedback.

This report provides an overview of the pre-application engagement activities undertaken, including with the key identified stakeholders and the methods used to attempt engagement with them. This report forms part of a comprehensive suite of documents submitted in support of the application proposal and should be read alongside them.

2. POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONSULTATION

1.1 Local Policy

The Exeter City Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), adopted in July 2022, sets out how the City Council wants to involve our communities, organisations and other interested parties when preparing planning policies and making decisions on planning applications.

The adopted SCI states that the NPPF encourages pre-submission with the local community and further states that:

"We encourage pre-application discussions for all application types to confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and to clarify what supporting information and level of detail is required for us to make a decision on a subsequent application."

"Developers and applicants are encouraged to engage as appropriate with statutory consultees (such as Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and the broader community, as early as possible in developing their proposals. For example, a developer might hold a public meeting or exhibition to seek local people's views before applying."

1.2 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recommends that developers engage with local communities during the pre-application stage, referred to as 'frontloading'. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states: "Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".

Local Planning Authorities are to encourage developers to engage with the local community, even when not required by law, before submitting applications (NPPF paragraph 40). Early pre-application consultation with statutory consultees is also supported in the NPPF (paragraph 41).

1.3 Best Practice

In addition to the requirements and advice set out in the NPPF and Exeter City Council's SCI, DevComms and Spinnaker Estates have sought to ensure that all the material relating to the application proposal has been prepared to reflect the following best practice principles:

- Prepare 'plain English' clear, concise, and understandable briefing material.
- Make information and material accessible to the local community.
- Publicise the proposals and events.
- Contact with key individuals likely to have most interest in the proposals to explain the approach to consultation and provide a briefing on the proposals.

Data Protection

A disclaimer was included on the feedback forms which detailed how collected data would be used. This detailed that in undertaking public engagement with the local community, DevComms is a registered Data Controller under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

At all times, processing personal data is carried out in accordance with GDPR regulations, with the feedback form providing an 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' option and information on respondents' rights under GDPR.

Only data required for the purposes of the consultation was requested on the feedback form.

The feedback collected during the engagement exercise is held by DevComms and will only be used for the purposes of the consultation and research on the proposals. The feedback received is detailed in this Statement of Community Involvement submitted to Exeter City Council.

This report however does not name individuals, aside from local Councillors and under no circumstances will personal data be shared for marketing purposes or with companies outside DevComms. Published results do not include personal information or anything that could identify individuals.

Consultation respondents will only be contacted again in the future in relation to the application proposals if they have explicitly stated that they would like to be kept updated.

3. RATIONALE AND APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Spinnaker Estates has been committed to engaging with key stakeholders prior to the submission of the planning application in order to provide those with an interest in the proposals with an overview of the proposals.

3.1 Pre application engagement

Prior to the submission of the planning application, Spinnaker Estates undertook several pre application meetings with political and local stakeholders.

Below is a full list of pre application meetings.

- LPA Scoping Meeting: 01/05/25
- Pre Application Meeting 01: 25/06/25
- Design Review Panel: 14/07/25
- Pre Application Meeting 02: 19/08/25
- Pre Application Meeting 03: 15/08/25
- Planning Members Working Group: 16/08/25

Pre Application meeting 01: 25th June 2025

At Pre-App 01, the discussion focused on the scheme's potential impact on and contribution to the townscape, heritage, and views, supported by a comprehensive site appraisal.

Planning Feedback:

- Council site allocation and capacity discussed at 6-8 storeys.
- To considered biodiversity enhancement opportunities on site (such as bat & bird boxes).
- Proposed townscape and heritage views reviewed, with proposed amendments discussed and confirmed.

Design Review Panel – Design West: 14th July 2025

Spinnaker Estates undertook a Design Review Panel which is an independent body comprising architects, urban designers, landscape architects, engineers, transport planners, heritage experts and other design-related professionals with a local interest and recognised expertise in their field to provide design support in the assessment of development proposals. A package of information surrounding the design of the site was circulated to members of the panel on the 8th July prior to the meeting on the 14th July 2025.

The Design Review provided a range of helpful feedback on the evolving and emerging design approach which have been incorporated into the submitted proposals, this includes:

- encouraging a more integrated approach that capitalises on the advantages of shared ownership and management between the proposed development and the immediately adjacent Printworks. Suggesting a comprehensive spatial design across the redline boundary.
- The scheme's approach to Verney Street was discussed in some detail, identifying greater opportunities to help activate this frontage including the potential incorporation of balconies, street level articulation and further consideration of service provision.
- developing and enhancing the existing courtyards in The Printworks to create a flowing sequence of outdoor amenity spaces, which integrates the two properties within one comprehensively designed and managed spatial arrangement.
- To seek resolution on heights and massing to ensure the amenity space is attractive, naturally lit and usable, both within the site and in its immediate surrounding area.

Further to the Design Review Panel, two other preapplication meetings were held on 18th August and 15th September.

A copy of the Pre App And Design Review Panel Feedback Summary is included in the Appendix F.

Planning Member Working Group 16th September

Prior to the Planning Member Working Group meeting a 90-page report was sent to attendees in advance of the meeting. The meeting was attended by several members of the development team, ECC Councillors as well as ECC planning officers.

Below is a list of the Councillors who attended the meeting:

- Cllr Zoë Hughes (Ind) – Pennsylvania ward
- Cllr Janes Banyard (Green) - St David's ward
- Cllr Mitchell Michael (Lib Dem) - Duryard & St James ward
- Cllr Paul Knott (Lab) - Exwick ward
- Cllr Lynn Wetenhall (Green) - Newton & St Leonards ward
- Cllr Matthew Vizard (Lab) - Newton & St Leonards ward

The meeting provided a chance for councillors to ask project specific questions as well as to gauge opinions and feelings towards the proposals.

Key points of discussion related to:

- Cycle parking provision and cycle hire schemes
- Accessible rooms
- Connection to the District Heating Network
- Prospect for a controlled pedestrian crossing across Summerland Street

4. OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Political Engagement

Initial contact was made with key political stakeholders, with these initial briefings providing information about the proposals as well as beginning a process of consultation in August 2025 and early September 2025:

- Cllr Phillip Bialyk (Lab) - Leader of the Council.
- Cllr Susannah Patrick (Lab) - Portfolio for City Development
- Cllr Andy Ketchin (Green) - Newton & St Leonards ward
- Cllr Lynn Wetenhall (Green) - Newton & St Leonards ward
- Cllr Matthew Vizard (Lab) - Newton & St Leonards ward
- Devon County Councillor Thomas Richardson (Green) - St Sidwells & St James Division

Meetings were offered to key political stakeholders above prior to the public consultation commencing.

Communication was made with Cllr Susannah Patrick (Lab) Portfolio for City Development. Rather than meeting separately, it was agreed that the presentation to the 16th September meeting of the Exeter City Council, Planning Member Working Group would negate the need for an onsite meeting.

An on-site meeting was held with the Newtown and St Leonards ward representatives on the 2nd September 2025. Councillor Andy Ketchin did not attend the meeting due to his position on the Planning Committee. The two councillors who attended the site visit are stated below:

- Cllr Lynn Wetenhall (Green) Newton & St Leonards
- Cllr Matthew Vizard (Lab) Newton & St Leonards

4.2 Stakeholder Groups

Further initial briefings were made during the pre-application phase, these briefings also included the Newsletter that was circulated to local residents as well as an invitation to a drop-in session that was to be held on 10th September, including:

- Exeter Chamber of Commerce
- InExeter
- Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen of Exeter
- Exeter University
- Exeter Civic Society
- Sidwell Methodist Church

In response to InExeter's request for further information for a feature in their September Newsletter. Further information was provided as well as an image of an illustrative view of the site for the publication.

A copy of the publication is included in the Appendix I.

4.3 Newsletter Mailing

The consultation period began on 1st September 2025 with a four-page A4 newsletter that featured information on the site, as well as detail of the drop-in event and provided links to a feedback form via a QR code.

The newsletter was circulated to residential and business addresses close to the development site and incorporated 337 addresses.

A copy of the newsletter and consultation area is included In Appendix A.

4.4 Press Release

On Wednesday 3rd September and further on the Friday 5th September, a press release was issued to local newspapers, Devon Live, Exeter Echo, Exeter Observer informing the wider area of the proposals and the developer. The press release resulted in articles in all three publications.

A copy of the Press Release and resultant articles is included in the Appendix C.

4.5 Public Drop-in Event

A public drop-in event was held on Wednesday 10th September from 14:00 to 18:00, at St Sidwell's Community Centre. The venue was chosen as a well-known local community venue, suitable for disabled access and one which is typically busy with local people using the popular facility throughout the day.

The drop-in session comprised seven A1 boards detailing the design as well as detailing the proposals themselves. Three members of the team were available to answer questions at the session, as well to guide residents as well as stakeholders around the proposals.

Copies of materials were available for attendees to take away and feedback forms could be submitted at the event or taken away with a freepost envelope.

4.6 Exeter Civic Society

There were several comments raised by a representative of the Exeter Civic Society during the drop-in event. The Civic Society also provided a letter in response to the consultation. A response has also been provided, a copy of which is included at Appendix H.

5. FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

Comments received were collated and analysed to understand the main areas of interest arising from the consultation.

During the consultation two feedback forms were received. One was from an attendee to the drop-in session which was overwhelmingly positive towards the site and proposals. The submitted form stated that the design of the scheme would "*greatly enhance the area and bring life into the centre of Exeter*". The other feedback form was submitted online.

Redacted copies of the feedback forms are provided at Appendix E.

The briefing newsletter was issued to 337 residential and business addresses close to the site and a press release was issue and subsequently published by multiple local news outlets. The proposals were also directly raised with local stakeholders to provide information on the proposals and publicising the drop-in session.

Despite the consultation being well publicised, only six people attended the public drop in event and only two feedback forms were returned during the consultation period.

This level of feedback is likely reflective of the limited number of residential neighbours to the site; and given that this part of Exeter contains several other student accommodation. The limited interest suggests that residents are apathetic towards the proposals and do not have in-principal concerns with the proposed redevelopment of this site for student accommodation.

Generally, the feedback from those who attended the event was positive, with support of the principle of redeveloping a brownfield site and the provision of PBSA in this location, as well as design of the building. Anecdotally support was expressed for the provision of studio apartments providing a point of difference to student cluster accommodation.

6. RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RAISED

Responses covering the key planning-related and most frequently raised issues are provided below.

Height of the building:

The proposed development will be 6 storeys high at approximately 18-20 metres high with the height fluctuating based on the change in topography along Summerland Street.

By contrast adjacent buildings, such as The Depot on Bampfylde St reaches 8 storeys high and the proposed co-living development adjacent will be 6 storeys.

The proposed development will therefore be in keeping with the buildings already delivered and consented in this part of the city.

Design of the building:

The design of the building has undergone a rigorous process of evaluation through the Council's pre-application process, as well as via the Design Review Panel process with Design West - a panel of independent body comprising architects, urban designers, landscape architects, engineers, transport planners, heritage experts and other design-related professionals with a local interest and recognised expertise in their field to provide design support in the assessment of development proposals.

Need for PBSA:

The University of Exeter is of great importance to Exeter's socio-economic and cultural prosperity. The University seen a dramatic increase in student numbers over the last decade, with numbers continuing to grow above national averages.

The University's intake in understood to be growing by an average of 750 students per year[1]. Due to the increasing number of students in the City, purpose built student accommodation is increasingly needed.

[1] Greater Exeter: Student Housing Needs Assessment, Report of Findings, Opinion Research Services, November 2024.

Student accommodation is the desired type of housing for students as it provides students with good quality, well managed housing and it eases pressure on existing housing stock.

In 2022/23, there were 10,950 students living in private rented accommodation, primarily in HMOs, which could otherwise be used as family housing for local people.[2]

The emerging Local Plan also sets out that new student accommodation should be located where students' day-to-day needs can be met without using a private car and with good connections to the University campuses. The former Unit 1 site, within the Grecian Quarter regeneration Area, is therefore, a perfect location to meet the growing requirement for new student accommodation in Exeter

Studio size and adaptable studios

All studios are designed within the 18–25sqm range, consistent with good practice benchmarks.

The scheme provides six adaptable studios across the building, including one at ground floor level and on each subsequent floor, all with level access. This level of provision is consistent with other PBSA uses within the City.

District Heating Network

It is intended that the building will be connected to Exeter's proposed District Heating Network which is scheduled for operational delivery in 2028.

In the event that a connection to the District Heating Network is not possible at the time of construction, the building will be heated via a Air Source Heat Pump and there will be the ability to retrofit into the District Heating Network at a future day in this scenario.

Sustainability / Photovoltaic Panels

The proposed building has been designed to achieve a BREEAM accreditation of Excellent.

The proposals also include Photovoltaic Panels (PV) on the roof of the building as part of a bio-solar roof. The panels will create energy for the site,

s[2] Cushman & Wakefield , Student Need Assessment -submitted with planning application.

with an estimated annual output of ~39,000kWh/year, allowing for the operation of the site to be fully net zero.

Cycle parking

The proposals make high-quality provision for cycle parking, which has been developed with input from Exeter City Council; the Design Review Panel and the Planning Members Working Group.

A total of 73 spaces are proposed for students, visitors and staff, supported by shared pool bikes.

The provision includes:

- 55x cycle spaces for students, including 1x oversized
- 8x standard cycle spaces for hire, with bikes proposed to be bookable freely by students
- 9x visitor cycle spaces, including 2x oversized
- 1x staff cycle space, based on the assumption that there will be 1x full time staff member on site

The proposed visitor & staff parking is in line with the requirements as set out in the Exeter Sustainable Transport SPD.

Waste collection

A weekly collection strategy is proposed, with bins stored internally and wheeled out on collection days. The layout ensures this can be managed safely, with sufficient space provided to enable staff to rotate bins within the store as required.

Bins will be able to be collected via Summerland Street, maintaining sufficient space for pedestrian and wheelchair access along the public highway.

7. CONCLUSION

In order to ensure that the local community was fully briefed and provided with an opportunity to comment on the plans, a detailed public engagement was carried out.

The consultation included a drop-in session invite mailing to local residents and an online feedback form was made available to local residents and stakeholders to provide comments.

Despite the consultation being well publicised, only six people attended the public drop in event and only two feedback forms were returned during the consultation period.

This level of feedback is likely reflective of the limited number of residential neighbours to the site; and given that this part of Exeter contains several other student accommodation. The limited interest suggests that residents are apathetic towards the proposals and do not have in-principal concerns with the proposed redevelopment of this site for student accommodation.

This therefore suggests that the local residents of Exeter were apathetic towards the proposals. Generally, the feedback from those who attended the event was positive, with support of the principle of PBSA, redevelopment of a brownfield site as well as design of the building. Support was also received for the provision of studio apartments compared to student cluster accommodation.

The two respondents were positive about the prospect of the proposals with comments suggesting the design would "greatly enhance the area and bring life into the centre of Exeter."

Going forward Spinnaker Estates is committed to continuing to engage with the local community and to work together to resolve concerns as far as possible.

APPENDIX A

LEAFLET SENT TO 337 ADDRESSES NEARBY THE SITE

APPENDIX B

CONSULTATION AREA

APPENDIX C

PRESS RELEASE &
ARTICLE

APPENDIX D

PUBLIC DROP-IN BOARDS

APPENDIX E

FEEDBACK FORM

APPENDIX F

PRE APP AND DESIGN REVIEW PANEL FEEDBACK SUMMARY

(EXTRACT FROM DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT)

APPENDIX G

INEXETER NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION

APPENDIX H

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY
LETTER AND RESPONSE

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