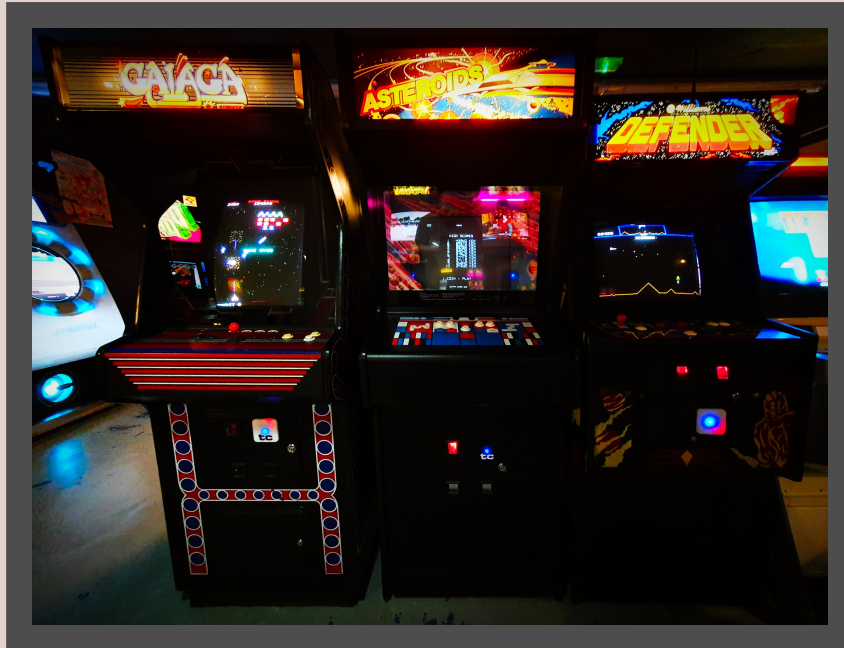


# SUPERVIDEO LTD.



**B** **O** **N** **E**  
**Y** **A** **R** **D**

**VIDEO GAMES & PINBALL**

**PLANNING STATEMENT AUGUST 2025**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This statement supports an application to change the use class of a vacant retail property on Sidwell Street, Exeter—from Class E to Sui Generis—for a video game and pinball-focused recreation centre. The site, formerly occupied by Brighthouse, has remained vacant for five years.

The proposed venue will feature vintage arcade games from the 1970s to 1990s, including titles like *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man*, alongside select modern games such as dance machines. Entry will be free, with gameplay accessed via token cards sold at the counter. No gambling machines will be installed now or in the future.

The applicant also seeks permission to sell a limited range of snacks and alcohol during evening hours, outside typical family visitation times. Alcohol sales will be secondary to the venue's core purpose and served from a fridge behind the main counter—there will be no pub-style bar or club setup. The aim is to foster a social, game-focused environment rather than a bar or restaurant with incidental entertainment.

The venue will also offer themed merchandise, including clothing, posters, and collectibles. The business will occupy the entire building, with the ground floor serving as the main operational area and upper floors used for storage and staff facilities. Lease terms include provision for an accessible ground floor bathroom.

This development will contribute positively to Exeter's city centre by offering a unique leisure destination for all ages, attracting both local residents and visitors, creating employment, and enhancing the area's social and economic vitality.

## 2. THE SITE

The proposed site comprises a three-storey building (approx. 3,335 sqft) constructed in 1965 with red brick, concrete, and flat roofing. It sits within a row of commercial premises leading toward Exeter's High Street and is identified in the Publication Draft Exeter Plan (Winter 2024/25) as part of a strategic mixed-use brownfield area.

Previously owned by the Crown Estate, the property was earmarked for redevelopment before plans were withdrawn. It has since been sold to Frasers Group PLC, who have yet to disclose future intentions for the site.

The building is surrounded by a mix of national retailers and independent businesses, including Sainsbury's Local, Poundland, John Lewis, and nearby community interest companies such as Sidwell Bakehouse and Positive Lights Projects. To the rear lies Bampfylde Street Car Park and the former bus station site, currently awaiting redevelopment.

The surrounding area is predominantly commercial, with limited residential presence. Flats are located above 18 Sidwell Street, directly opposite the proposed venue, while the next nearest residential units are approximately 100 metres away at Sidwell House, above the British Heart Foundation store. St. Sidwell's Community Centre is also situated nearby.

The site also benefits from excellent public transportation links.

### 3. PROPOSAL

- **Planning Permission and Nature of Use**

Full planning permission is sought for a change of use to a video game and pinball centre. While such venues are often referred to as “arcades,” this proposal differs significantly from modern arcade models.

- **Distinction from Traditional Arcades**

Contemporary arcades typically fall into two categories:

- Family Entertainment Centres (FECs): Feature games of chance (e.g. slot machines, coin pushers, crane games) and “redemption” games that award tickets redeemable for prizes.
- Adult Gaming Centres (AGCs): Primarily offer slot machines and bingo, both forms of cash-based gambling.

Our venue will not include any machines offering cash or prize rewards. It will focus exclusively on video games and pinball—now rare in traditional arcade settings.

- **Branding and Signage**

Although the public may refer to the venue as an arcade, the term will not appear in our signage. We will clearly present the venue as a space for playing video games and pinball, with no gambling activities now or in the future.

### KEY DETAILS

- Proposed venue will feature vintage video game machines and pinball. Some modern dance themed games.
- No gambling or prize games at the venue and no gambling activities allowed to take place.
- Free admission for customers with games played via a bespoke contactless card system. Customers are free to come and go as often as they wish.
- Opening hours are proposed to be Mondays to Wednesdays, midday til 9pm, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from midday til 11pm, and Sunday, midday until 9pm. Hours may be initially limited during the opening period on Mondays to Wednesdays, opening on those days if there is sufficient demand. We are open to discussion with the planning authority on any proposed opening hours.
- Outside of the normal operating hours, e.g. Weekend mornings from 10am, we may wish to allow private hire of the venue for small groups for childrens parties, university society socials and corporate events.
- Sales of soft drinks, small selection of snacks/food and alcohol sales during evenings outside of times normally frequented by families. A kitchen with extraction will not be required at any point.
- Number of staff onsite will be 2-4 during opening hours depending on time of week

and level of business.

#### **4. PLANNING HISTORY**

The previous business located at the premises had obtained permission for larger signage and illuminated drop signs in the window display. Our intention is only to have signage within pre-existing consent limits and not apply for larger signage at this time.

#### **5. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS**

The proposal has been discussed with the City Development department at Exeter City Council with advice sought and given. Including advice that a Noise Impact assessment should be sought to understand the implications of any noise that may occur from the business and what means of mitigation of said noise will be applicable if necessary. This work will be undertaken by an expert in acoustic assessment who is a member of the Institute of Acoustics.

#### **6. LOCAL POLICIES & SITE ALLOCATIONS**

##### **Existing local plan 2005 - Shopping and Commercial Leisure**

- To locate commercial leisure facilities within the City Centre. Since the local plan was written in 2005, there has been an even greater change in shopping habits, with more people shopping online, leaving many retail units unoccupied. Exeter has fared better in this regard than many other cities but there are still a notable number of mid size and larger retail units either remaining unoccupied or occupied with temporary pop-up enterprises.
- The proposed venue introduces accessible leisure activities to the heart of Exeter, easily reached by public transport or on foot.
- By attracting a broad demographic, the venue will enhance footfall, benefiting nearby shops and contributing to the vibrancy of the night-time economy.
- The site is ideally positioned—adjacent to Exeter Bus Station, within walking distance of Exeter Central train station, and surrounded by bus stops on Sidwell Street and the High Street.
- The venue caters to a wide age range (15–65), with younger visitors drawn to retro machines they've never encountered, and older patrons enjoying nostalgic gameplay—particularly pinball, which has proven popular among older age groups.
- Over time, video gaming has grown into a mainstream leisure activity, though largely confined to the home. Based on prior experience and the rise of similar venues nationwide, there is clear and growing demand for dedicated gaming spaces in city centres.

- The proposed venue differs significantly from a typical amusement arcade. No gambling will be permitted, and noise levels will be carefully managed to avoid disturbance to nearby residential or commercial occupants. While leisure uses can generate noise, we will mitigate this through:
  1. Sensible volume settings on machines
  2. Keeping doors closed
  3. Encouraging quiet departures in the evening
  4. Limiting opening hours to no later than 11pm

A noise impact assessment will be conducted shortly, and we welcome dialogue on any concerns regarding potential disturbance.

- **Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour**

The proposal is not expected to negatively impact community safety or contribute to anti-social behaviour. The venue will be managed responsibly, with staff present during all operating hours to ensure appropriate conduct. We will implement clear signage outlining expected behaviour and will not tolerate loitering, vandalism, or any form of nuisance.

The nature of the venue—focused on video games and pinball—does not typically attract problematic behaviour. Unlike establishments offering gambling or alcohol, our proposal is geared toward casual leisure and entertainment. We are committed to maintaining a safe, welcoming environment for all visitors and neighbouring occupants.

Should any concerns arise, we are open to working collaboratively with local authorities and community representatives to address them promptly and effectively.

- **Heritage and Surroundings**

The proposal will not affect the character, appearance, or setting of listed buildings or buildings of local importance. Although a few residential apartments and St. Sidwell's Chapel and Community Centre are nearby, the premises are not adjacent to schools, hospitals, or hotels. The location is primarily commercial, with existing betting shops and a recently approved Adult Gaming Centre on Sidwell Street. Unlike these businesses, our venue will not offer gambling.

- **Visual Amenity**

The proposal will enhance visual amenity. Video game and pinball machines will be visible from the street, offering a more engaging frontage than the previously shuttered unit. We welcome discussions on the venue's presentation and street-facing appearance.

- **Temporary Use and Redevelopment**

We acknowledge that exemptions may apply to temporary use of buildings pending redevelopment. The landlord, Frasers Group PLC, has confirmed that the site is part of a future redevelopment plan, as disclosed during initial negotiations.

## Adopted Core Strategy 2012

- **Enhancing Leisure Provision**

The proposal will expand leisure offerings in the city centre, benefiting local families, workers, and the student population.

- **Revitalising Vacant Retail Space**

Repurposing a long-vacant retail unit for leisure use addresses the growing number of dormant larger properties in Exeter. Many remain unoccupied due to limited interest from retailers and uncertainty around lease durations linked to future redevelopment. This proposal reactivates a unit in an area where several others remain unused.

- **Community Access and Engagement**

The venue will offer accessible leisure activities and create local employment. We also plan to host technology workshops for schools and community groups, exploring the history and mechanics of video games. We will be consulting local community groups, having already been in touch with Exeter St. James community trust regarding the proposal.

- **Supporting Sustainability and Social Cohesion**

By reusing an existing vacant property, the proposal aligns with sustainability goals. It will also serve as a meeting space for local communities, gaming groups, and university societies—supporting competitive gaming and social interaction among like-minded individuals.

## NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The proposed use of the site would directly support a small business venture, resulting in inward investment both on-site and within the surrounding area. It would generate additional employment opportunities and contribute positively to local economic growth, aligning with national and local planning objectives.

The proposal is sustainable as defined by the NPPF, meeting social, economic, and environmental objectives:

- **Socially:** Promoting job creation and retention, supporting surrounding local services, and providing a leisure facility aligned with both national and local goals for community wellbeing.
- **Economically:** Strengthening the local economy by supporting a new business and generating employment opportunities.
- **Environmentally:** The proposal aims to enhance the vibrancy of the area and is situated in a sustainable location. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated.

## **Pollution Control & Residential Amenity**

The proposal involves no external works and would not give rise to issues of overlooking, overshadowing, or loss of privacy for any neighbouring property.

While it is acknowledged that some leisure uses can generate noise, the nature of the proposed use, combined with restricted opening hours and the site's location within a predominantly commercial area, ensures that any potential for disturbance is minimal.

Accordingly, With the implementation of aforementioned noise mitigation methods, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable increase in noise or disruption to neighbouring properties and would be considered fully compliant with residential amenity and pollution control objectives.

## **Highways**

The site is located in an area with excellent transportation links and is easily accessible by foot. It is anticipated that visitors who wish to travel by car will make use of already existing car parks nearby. There will be no provision of on-site parking. The proposal would not have a detrimental effect on local highways efficiency or safety.

## **Flood Risk Assessment**

The application site is not located within a designated flood risk zone, as confirmed by Environment Agency mapping. The proposal does not involve significant physical works or any material increase in hard surfacing. As such:

- The site is not at unacceptable risk of flooding.
- The proposed use would not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- No additional drainage infrastructure or flood mitigation measures are required.

The development is therefore considered fully compliant with national and local flood risk policy.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The proposed development represents a sustainable form of development, with no unacceptable impacts identified in relation to residential or commercial amenity, flood risk, noise, or environmental quality.

The scheme is considered to be in full accordance with adopted planning policy and national guidance, and it delivers clear social, economic, and environmental benefits.

The Applicant respectfully urges the Local Planning Authority to grant planning permission for the proposal.

The Applicant remains willing to engage constructively with the LPA to address any matters arising during the determination process.

Philip Jones

Supervideo Ltd. T/A Boneyard Exeter  
3 Westleat Avenue,  
Paignton,  
TQ3 3UL  
Boneyardexeter@gmail.com