

From: Andy Robinson [mailto:]
Sent: 18 April 2020 18:12
To: Matthew Diamond <Matthew.Diamond@exeter.gov.uk>
Cc: CLLR Diana Moore <CLLR.Diana.Moore@exeter.gov.uk>
Subject: Additional objection and questions from Save our Historic Exeter

Dear Matt,

As the St Davids Residents Group we would like to add the following to our objection to planning application 19/1556/FUL (Harlequin's Centre site, Exeter).

1. Corona Virus:

This global pandemic has to be fully considered in relation to the Harlequins proposal and a document provided about what would be done to mitigate and protect the residents and surrounding community in the future.

We are concerned that in times of infectious disease the proposed co-living development constitutes an unreasonable and irresponsible risk to public health and safety.

High density shared living:

- The above planning application suggests hundreds of transient renters using shared kitchens and facilities. Health and Safety, disease control/ potential cross infection have to now be a major consideration for this development. The space between individuals is of paramount importance to preventing disease transmitting from one to another.
- The NHS have recently provided COVID 19 guidelines for shared houses and flats. According to these guidelines, sharing tenants should not use a kitchen at the same time as others. Given that most shared houses and flats in the UK are far less populated than the proposed co-living building, these guidelines would be difficult or impossible to follow in such a dense environment.
- It is now proven that COVID 19 has spread most and rapidly in high density facilities such as nursing home or cruise ships and it is now sufficiently documented all over the world that high density living is the main breeding ground for COVID 19 and indeed many other infectious diseases. The proposed development is designed around high density living in an already highly densely populated area in the City Centre. There is no shortage of land in and around Exeter.
- Given that Co-living is marketed as 'open to everyone' by developers and indeed the leader of Exeter City Council, we would be very interested to know how high risk groups such as the elderly or people with immunosuppressive disorders/ rheumatology/ diabetes could possibly be kept safe in this new experimental form of housing.

Isolating in co-living

- As co-living sells itself as permanent housing (as opposed to i.e. hotels, where guests can leave and go home), most co-living residents will have to stay in such premises during a pandemic.
- Evidently this type of high density living is completely unsuitable for self-isolating in case of another pandemic or indeed another wave of COVID 19. The size of many of the rooms in the proposed development would be highly insufficient for someone to remain in for weeks/ 23 hours a day.
- Also, if self isolation is needed again in the future the outside space of above planning application is far too small for potentially hundreds of renters. This limited space would be another shared facility with high cross contamination risk.

2. Sustainability survey:

A substantial global economic downturn due to the COVID 19 crisis is now evident and a huge shift in public behaviour patterns is now expected by most international experts and governments. We would therefore ask Exeter City Council for an in-depth sustainability study for above planning application and for the developer to completely review their economic model which seems now out of date.

Demand for short term accommodation is highly likely to go down significantly with declining numbers of overseas students and contractors and freelancers increasingly likely to be working from home or off site.

Higher unemployment amongst the young will almost certainly reduce the demand for such a development especially as no evidence has yet been brought forward by developers or ECC that the proposed housing qualifies as affordable accommodation.

3. Viability survey:

It is also evident that due to the Corona crisis financial markets will significantly suffer and many investments will change, shift or stop all together.

We would like an in-depth review of the developers, their associated contractors and sub contractors that they would financially be able to finish a project of this size and magnitude.

4. Outstanding questions:

We have a number of questions regarding the proposed development which have not yet been sufficiently answered by Exeter City Council.

Could you therefore please clarify the following:

- a) Height of the proposed building from the ground to its highest point.
- b) Will there be a balloon test to demonstrate the height and volume of the proposed building?
- c) To fully understand whether the use of the proposed building is appropriate and coherent with planning laws we also need to know the average projected rental cost of individual co-living units per square meter in the proposed development.

5. Keeping us residents informed:

As St David's Residents Group have updated you about our objections in light of the current situation, we, in turn, need to know if any new documents have been submitted by the developers, and if so, we would like access to them please.

With regards to the proposed development we would also like to reiterate that we are expecting to be informed about any committee meeting taking place.

A committee meeting has to be public even if it is done remotely in the light of the current COVID 19 situation.

Many thanks