Bus Station/Paris Street redevelopment:
Response from Exeter Green Party

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the outline plans for the above development. Our response draws not only on the opinion and expertise of members, but also the public work we have undertaken with local residents over the years, particularly on local business and transport issues.

Overall, we welcome:
1. The redevelopment of the site which is tired and doesn’t make best use of the available city centre land and its emphasis on leisure uses.
2. The proposals seek to create a development which ties into, rather than separates itself off, from the neighbouring areas.
3. The inclusion of sustainable urban drainage, which we understand to be an underground water tank, especially since localised flooding relatively near to the area can be a problem. Water created on site must be disposed of onsite.
4. We welcome the stated commitment to improve the ecology of the site – using green roofs etc. We are unable to comment on the extent of this commitment as there was little detail available and the ecological value of the site is currently very poor.
5. The statement that the walking areas will be flat or very gently undulating.
6. The stated goal to build the new development to BREEAM excellent standards and the swimming pool to the passiv standard. Such standards are crucial not only to tackle climate change but also to create buildings which are more affordable to run and more comfortable to use and live in.
7. We support the proposed new swimming pool.

There are a number of issues which need to further clarification or addressing by the developer’s and City Council:

1. Market square: The proposed retail/restaurant units are more of the same type of units already available along the High Street and Princesshay.

   A square which celebrates the distinctiveness and diversity of the ‘Best of Devon’ should be incorporated.

   This should provide market units to bridge the gap between street/occasional traders and permanent retail/restaurant units and make entry into the next stage of business growth less risky. These intermediate units would enable local start-ups, micro-businesses and social enterprises to develop and trial high quality products (artisan craft and food etc) for a period of time. Such a launch pad, in a high footfall area, would create a zone which would attract creative businesses that would tie into the purpose of the redevelopment. The space should also become a new home for the popular and high quality weekly Farmers’ market. These measures would create variety and interest to visitors, especially as the businesses change over time. Some of the business might grow to be able to take over larger permanent units in the development.

2. Economic strategy for the area and viability of the site: We are particularly concerned that the centre will focus on high-end/exclusive restaurants and food businesses based on a strategy to attract new businesses to the City. We are concerned that existing local business will move out of the area and not be able to afford to move back in. We would expect that local business already
existing in the area be encouraged and enabled to stay, with rents set at an affordable level for them to be able to do so. Existing business are a crucial part of the local economy and help maintain Exeter’s distinctiveness. Such redevelopments have the effect of moving such small and local business to the fringes of developments, and affect their viability and the diversity of a town centre. Many of the smaller units, designed for smaller business in Princesshay are currently vacant – possibly due to their secondary location or rent levels.

The development focuses exclusively on restaurants which does not create an interesting and mixed offer. The units should be a mix of commercial uses.

The development lacks any housing on the site, as there is in Princesshay. Inner city living is attractive to many people and can contribute towards reducing the City’s carbon footprint. This would make better use of the inner city area and create life for the site after working hours. A low or no car development of flats/maisonettes including affordable and social housing should be incorporated.

3. **Leisure uses**
A new swimming pool though would like there to be a wide range of affordable leisure activities, especially for young people. Concerns have been raised that the pool will not be Olympic sized, which will inhibit elite sports development in the City. The pool should also include fun features for children and be fully accessible for people with disabilities.

The details about the cinema were insufficient to be able to judge if this is appropriate for inclusion in the site. We asked about the business case and the market it is expected to appeal to but there was no further information available. There must be a clear business case, with a proven demand which is distinct from the existing provision and fits with the cultural strategy for the City. We are concerned that the cinema might affect the viability of local arts venues in particular the Phoenix, Picture House and innovative local theatre such as the Bike Shed. Clarity over its purpose and impact is necessary. There is clearly a demand for a city centre theatre and would recommend that this venue is designed as a flexible space for film, theatre and music events – which would reduce the impact on any particular existing business and could attract the sort of touring theatre that at present goes to Bristol, Plymouth and Torquay but not Exeter.

4. **Inclusion**: We would urge that streetscape is designed to be safe, especially for children, easily used by less ambulant people/people with disabilities, wheelchair users and takes into consideration the latest guidance on being ‘dementia friendly’. The swimming pool and leisure activities should be affordable and especially cater for young people.

5. **Ecology**: We note that there was no indication of planting, including of trees, in the development which is a concern. The urban landscape must be softened and the ecology improved with planting at street level. We would recommend the inclusion of fruit/nut trees and natives species into the planting scheme. Lighting should be low energy and have a reduced impact on ecology as possible.

6. **Transport**:  
*Integration*: There is a lack of evidence about how this site will connect up with public transport and the promotion of the hierarchy of transport agreed by Devon and Exeter City Councils.
Bus Station: The siting of the bus station is of concern as this is far away from the High Street and Princesshay. Is the station sufficiently large enough to accommodate both local and Devon wide services? The permeability to the site from Sidwell Street needs to be maintained as there are no busses through the site.

National Express station: This must be easy and safe to connect with the bus station and other local services across the road.

Cycling: cycling to the site from the south west is already well catered for (along the High Street). It was suggested the existing cycle routes into Princesshay via Barnfield Road would be used to access the site from the East. However this is not a logical route to access this development and there are no proposals to link up Princesshay to the site. Accessing the site by bike needs to be throughout and new routes developed across the city which avoid the roundabout by the Vue or have dedicated and separate cycle lanes across the roundabout. Cycling needs to be allowed through the site. Covered cycle parking should be provided at high levels – current city bike parks are currently used to overcapacity.

Walking: the site needs to be easily accessed and transversed by foot – see above points on inclusion.

7. Energy: Renewable energy should be included on site to provide some or all of the public lighting and to power the Units/Market Square.

8. Zero Waste: The site should be based a zero waste policy with zero to incineration and land fill. This would require waste reduction by unit operators, separate collection of food waste as well as full facilities for the public to separate their different types of waste when using the site.

Exeter Green Party
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Link to development proposals: www.princesshay.com/leisure