

Exeter Liberal Democrats

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Draft Exeter City Centre Strategy 2026 -2031 representation from Duryard & St James Ward Cllrs (Kevin Mitchell, Michael Mitchell, Tammy Palmer)

We are writing to Officers formally as Councillors who represent the Duryard & St James ward to express our serious concerns with regards the draft Exeter City Centre Strategy 2026 -2031.

We have been contacted by many of our St James residents; all are deeply concerned that the Council appears to have changed the boundary of the city centre which now swallows up huge areas of St James. We want to be very clear that no consultation has taken place either with residents, the St James Community Trust, any of the Residents Associations or the 3 ward Cllrs.

We have outlined in our representation our key concerns:

- 1) The consultation process
- 2) Wider consultation – lack of
- 3) Points that we wish to raise about the themes within the draft Exeter City Centre strategy 2026 - 2031
- 4) The proposed new city centre boundary which takes in large areas of St James

We ask Officers at the Council to pause work on this strategy until the matter of the ward boundary has been resolved formally and then to engage constructively and transparently with us as elected members and our residents, businesses and other key stakeholders to create a long term city centre strategy that we can all support and be proud of.

1) Consultation process - Survey

We note concerns raised by auditors to Exeter City Council around its consultation process we would like to ask Officers to consider whether this consultation is in line with the council's Consultation Charter (**Appendix 1**) areas we wanted to highlight are:

Visibility

All our consultations will be published on the Council's website so that residents and stakeholders can easily see what is up for decision and how to participate. A schedule of proposed consultations will be published annually on the council's website on 1st April and updated throughout the year.

The survey was very hard to find on the website – there is no clear signage or link to the survey on the front page of the council's website – many residents have told us they were unable to find the survey.

Accessibility

Surveys and questions and supporting information will be written in an objective, accessible (there is a missing word here in the charter we assume way?) to enable intelligent consideration and responses.

This survey is not objective – it sets out 6 predetermined themes and simply asks respondents to rank a set of priorities within them in order of personal preference. There is no ability within the survey to agree or disagree with either the themes or the priorities.

Whilst there are some free text box questions at the end of the survey these do not correspond with the earlier questions and there is no opportunity for respondents to indicate that they do not agree with something or make a point related to an earlier question.

We will provide a named contact for each consultation so that residents and stakeholders know who they can speak to about proposals.

There is no named contact for this consultation – residents found out from looking at the Executive Council meeting minutes where it had been noted that residents could email in their comments in addition to completing the survey – this is not stated anywhere within the consultation.

Consultation plans will consider how people with impaired sight or hearing or people whose first language is not English are able to participate fully.

Where groups of people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 may be particularly affected, the consultation plan will identify who they are and how they will be involved, and an Equality Impact Assessment will be included in the final report.

Whilst there is the ability to translate content into other languages, we are uncertain as to how individuals with various disabilities have been able to access the survey and participate fully – this is not made clear on the website. We do not believe that collecting a paper copy from the Council constitutes a reasonable way for someone with a disability to engage and participate.

Any complaints about the consultation will be published so that decision-makers can assess the effectiveness of the consultation before making their decision.

Could we be assured that every complaint received will be published and that this is visible – we include in the appendices (**Appendix 4**) a full set of the representations from residents that we have received up until the point of our submission (28/06/26) Each of the representations received from residents are in relation to the draft Exeter City Centre Strategy and have been sent to you in the absence of residents being able to articulate their concerns regarding areas such as the proposed city centre boundary anywhere within the survey itself.

We would also ask that our own representation from (this document) will be published in full.

We will carefully consider all responses to each consultation, analyse responses promptly and objectively and ensure that the product of consultation is conscientiously taken into account when finalising a decision.

Could officers please explain how responses will be analysed objectively if the consultation is not objective in the first place, as stated above there is no ability for a resident to express agreement or disagreement. They are presented with a set of predetermined themes and priorities that they are asked to rank.

2) Lack of wider consultation

Exclusion of young people's voices

We are disappointed at what appears to be the complete exclusion of young people in particular 12–16-year-olds in this consultation process. The EQIA implies that the survey would be sent to Ted Wragg Schools we assume for parents to complete?

The age demographics section within the diversity and monitoring section of the survey starts at 16 so we assume the survey was not designed for young people to contribute themselves.

Given the great amount of work that Cllr Palmer undertook with a group of 13–15-year-old local students as part of the Customer Focus Scrutiny on the city centre it would have been the perfect opportunity for Officers to engage with a broader group of young people who are growing up in Exeter to ensure that their views are heard and taken into consideration.

It was the view of all attendees at that particular Customer Focus Scrutiny that both the presentation and supporting report from the young people's workshop was incredibly well thought through and provided

valuable insight into the challenges faced by young people in using facilities in Sidwell Street and the city centre, their ideas for creating a revitalised centre and their thoughts on the facilities that young people need.

Given that so many of their thoughts mirror the key areas Officers have chosen to focus on it is deeply disappointing that this work with young people was not considered or taken forward. We believe that listening to young people's views is vital – they contribute to both the economy and vitality of the city as much as anyone else does.

Given the impending changes to social media use and the concerns around young people struggling outside of education and unable to find opportunities for work it seems important that we include them and create opportunities for them to have spaces in the city that are designed for them.

We would urge Officers to work with Cllr Palmer and other Cllrs who have a passion for working with young people to ensure that we carry out meaningful workshops to ensure that the voice of young people is properly taken into consideration. We attach the presentation and report as part of the appendices.

(Appendix 2)

Wider group consultations

We note that an external organisation ran workshops where the following were invited to “Have their say” businesses, Public Sector Institutions, Educational Organisations, Stakeholders, Cultural Organisations, Citizens Groups and Private Developers with the aim of ***agreeing solutions to the challenges faced by people in the city*** – the key outcome of those sessions was a new City Centre Strategy and actions that will support the Exeter Vision 2040.

Given that the aim of the workshops was to look at finding solutions to the challenges faced by people in the city would it not be appropriate to involve residents in more meaningful ways than a 2-minute online survey that does not seek to genuinely ask their views.

Cllrs would be happy to support with community-based workshop events – or even to be asked what the key areas of concern from residents in their wards may be.

Cllrs were invited to a workshop which was very well run and enjoyable, however the workshop focus was very much pitched as an information gathering exercise on improvements to the city centre - it was not set up as a session for us to provide feedback from residents and neither were we given any detail about the strategy or proposed boundary changes.

We note that the EQIA also does not specify that any workshops for residents will take place, stating its way of communicating would be through social media, website and community groups.

Two of these methods exclude those unable to access information digitally, the third is a huge reliance on firstly the existence of community groups and that everyone attends or is in contact with a community group.

The Executive report also notes that the strategy is framed as a council led approach – this again implies that Officers have set out a predetermined list of activities that they want included in the strategy rather than being led by residents.

There should have been a much longer and more inclusive way of ensuring residents were able to participate. This approach feels rushed and the survey a simple box ticking exercise around a set of predetermined outcomes.

We note that concerns were raised at the April Executive meeting around short timescales for adoption and whether there was adequate time built in for any changes to the strategy we remain concerned on this point given the serious issues that are being raised by residents as part of the consultation and how Cllrs will be engaged appropriately in this.

We are also concerned that the Portfolio Holder at the time did not raise concerns around the objectivity of the survey, the lack of ability for residents to genuinely be consulted and the inclusion of a soft boundary which fundamentally changes the ward of St James.

3) The draft Exeter City Centre strategy 2026 - 2031

Whilst we agree in principle with many of the aspirations, the consultation document is very vague, and full of what has been referred to as to as 'word salad'.

It is difficult to find anything tangible in the survey – respondents are asked to rank the priorities in order of preference, but they have no idea what will be delivered, how it will be delivered, when it will be delivered, who will deliver it and how much investment is required

Some of the key themes such as street cleanliness and tackling anti-social behaviour should surely be ongoing operational matters – surely a city centre strategy should be ambitious in its goals rather than focussing on delivery of what should be basic requirements of a local authority.

There appears to be much cross over with the City Centre Cultural Strategy – we would question why they could not be combined and resource and investment put into making one strong strategy that would support all of the key areas outlined in both.

We would also urge you to read **Wake Up Exeter's** open letter addressed to Officers and to us as Cllrs. These are individuals directly involved in the very industries you say you want to see more of, telling you what the issue is <https://wakeupexeter.org/> having read the document we hope that you engage positively with them going forward.

As we have not had any opportunity to provide feedback on the themes or priorities within the survey, we wanted to take the opportunity to highlight two areas we have particular concerns about along with further questions we have and recommendations to officers.

Theme 2 – Safety, accessibility and Wellbeing

The city centre will be an inclusive, welcoming environment that is safe to be in, by day and night.

Anti-social behaviour will be addressed positively and with compassion, ensuring people feel safe and businesses thrive.

Inclusivity will be enhanced through the diverse, multi-use offering of the city centre that caters to a wider range of needs of its existing and future population.

Improved parks and public spaces providing infrastructure for disabled and older people.

The city centre will feel safer for residents, businesses and visitors because the designers, services and community will be working together to make improvements.

We are most disappointed in how this section has been set out and that there may well have been a clear motive to prevent our proposed cross party anti-social behaviour task and finish group which was proposed in September 2025 at the Customer Focus Scrutiny.

Nothing from the voices of young people has been included in this section about what might be important for them in terms of safety and wellbeing. The key priorities raised are vague and will achieve nothing different from what is currently in place – and it is evident that what is currently in place is clearly not working.

There was an opportunity within this section for the chance to really engage with residents and businesses and to tackle key hotspots such as Sidwell Street which sits within our ward.

We want to see real ambition for Sidwell Street, it is a gateway into the city and is an area rich in diversity and this should be supported and developed, it should be a destination place for shopping, arts and culture and known for its vibrant food offering, we need commitment to tackle the ongoing serious anti-social behaviour that blights the street, a commitment to cleaning it up and supporting existing businesses, we want to be creative with opportunities that come from repurposing the old bus station site – we support a new cultural hub here, the opportunity for pedestrianisation and holding street markets, rejuvenating Sidwell Street in collaboration with residents, making good use of empty unit and making the whole area feel more family friendly and somewhere that people don't avoid walking through.

We need commitment from the Council on clear actionable policies that support planning decisions in particular, implementing these could help prevent some issues present on Sidwell Street and also support better wellbeing for residents, these include:

Tackling fast food outlets and offering a healthier range of options

Prevention of a proliferation of fast-food takeaways – the young people we spoke to as part of the scrutiny workshop also told us they wanted better food options and not unhealthy junk food – Sidwell Street is full of fast foods shops this also creates the knock-on effect of litter and food being left on the street – adding to the issues in theme 1 around cleanliness.

There are examples of councils have these policies here <https://www.local.gov.uk/planning-healthier-communities-resource-managing-hot-food-takeaway-proliferation>

Sex shops and sexual entertainment venues

Whilst these establishments have a place, it is incredulous that the council has designated Sidwell Street as an appropriate place for licensed sex shops and sexual entertainment venues, given the serious concerns raised by women in particular about their safety walking through the city centre and Sidwell Street In particular– we would ask that this is given serious consideration if we want to create more family friendly high streets and safety for women. ***The EQIA also states that “Females have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre. For 2026 the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Exeter, will have a focus on addressing Violence Against Women and Girls. “***

Gambling premises

We would urge the Council to ensure that it takes advantage of any new powers proposed by the government to limit gambling premises on our high streets, whilst we respect that adults have a right to gamble, the issues caused by harmful gambling are now well known and well documented both to individuals, their families, wider society and to the areas they are located in.

Vape shops

As with gambling shops we would urge the Council to use any new powers that are proposed by the government to tackle the number of vape shops in high streets.

Task and finish group

Section 9 of the EQIA states that **an officer led city centre task and finish group** has been established. This would appear to be the same thing that was asked for in the Customer Focus Scrutiny by Cllr Michael Mitchell and Cllr Palmer – and one we were told was not needed as it duplicated existing work.

We would like to understand what this group is, who sits on it, what does it deliver and why Cllrs who have city centre areas or city centre borders within their wards have not been made aware or asked to make a contribution to this group.

This article published by the Exeter Observer outlines accurately the details of the Customer Focus Scrutiny session and which Officers spoke against a cross-party task and finish group. We have also included in the appendices the customer scrutiny proforma submitted. **(Appendix 3)**

<https://exeterobserver.org/2025/11/09/labour-conservative-councillors-join-forces-block-exeter-city-centre-antisocial-behaviour-initiative-voluntary-community-sector-thirteen-year-council-failure-comply-legal-duties-crime-disorder-legislation-exeter-community-safety-partnership/>

The EQIA section we are referring to is here:

9. Monitoring

<p>How will you monitor the impact of your proposed change once it has been implemented? Once the activity has been implemented this equality impact assessment should be periodically reviewed to make sure your changes have been effective and your approach is still appropriate. Include the timescale for review in your action plan above.</p>
<p>A new officer led City Centre Task and Finish Group has been established. This group will play an important role in the delivery of the Action Tracker, ensuring key actions and initiatives align with Service Plans.</p> <p>As results of the annual residents survey will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the Action Tracker, as well as metrics developed specifically to monitor impact and progress.</p>

Theme 5 of the strategy City Centre Living

The city will be recognised nationally and globally as a liveable city that puts well-being centre stage.

Exeter will meet the needs of all our residents; there will be a greater choice of housing options and improved affordability.

Major development sites will deliver housing and a diversity of uses.

The Liveable Exeter Principles will guide delivery of large-scale brownfield developments and infrastructure projects to ensure that changes in the built and natural environment deliver the outcomes of the Exeter Vision 2040.

The seven principles are: Memorable Places, Outstanding Quality, Welcoming Neighbourhoods, Liveable Buildings, Connected Culture, Spaces for People and Wildlife and Active Streets.

City centre residents will be more engaged with culture, health, nature and shopping as this will be made more accessible and available using digital technology, signage and mapping.

Nowhere in the strategy is the overrepresentation of student housing within the city centre addressed. Huge areas of the city centre are dominated by Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSAs) with more blocks to come, this has created uninviting, soulless parts of the city centre, empty for part of the year, with no green space that offers nothing of value for residents or visitors.

How will the Council deal with further requests for development of PBSAs –The Councils own policy states that PBSAs should be based in the city centre on the basis that students need to be located closer to the campus and to encourage them to be car free. The Council has no policy or methodology for calculating overrepresentation of student accommodation in the city – recently challenged by Cllr Palmer at the King Billy planning meeting and the Exeter Plan examination meeting.

If the Council is now stating that it would prefer to see more varied housing in the city centre where will further PBSAs be built?

What type of housing can we expect to see in the city going forward and how do we ensure that it is affordable, we know that a lack of affordable housing in the city is a key issue for many of our residents we have seen very recently developers successfully arguing against building the required number of affordable homes in developments, the strategy document is vague.

Ongoing concerns have been expressed by the Devon Housing Commission with regards to affordability of property in Exeter and availability of suitable property – excessive student housing both PBSA and HMO

rentals and co-living is seen as having exacerbated the problem – pushing prices up and limiting options for rental properties for young professionals in particular <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2392114278o>

Co-living as we know does not provide sustainable, affordable long-term homes and the proposed policy that the council has put forward as part of the Exeter plan is being challenged at examination by the Duryard and St James Cllrs as it is not robust enough.

Build to Rent (BTR) seems to be the latest trend and whilst the idea of providing longer term rental homes is a great concept the reality of Build to Rent appears to be very different with many organisations citing challenges around affordability compared to other properties in the private rental market – obviously as many private rentals in the city centre area and surrounding wards are specifically only marketed at students there is somewhat of a gap in the market and one we are sure developers will leap at the chance of. BTR is also very much aimed at a younger demographic – whilst we support building homes for younger residents it's important to remember that we need family homes in the city too.

We would encourage the Council to look at ensuring we have robust policies in place to ensure that BTR is aimed at long term residents and that developers provide the affordable housing that should be delivered as part of every development. We would also highlight the challenges of high rise living in terms of providing adequate outdoor space- this is particularly important for families, there is currently very little provision for families in the city centre – there are few parks with play equipment or green spaces for children to access safely, we would ask that as part of the strategy that green space is a key consideration for any new developments and that we consult with families along with children and young people to better understand the provisions they would like to see in the city centre.

4) The inclusion of a proposed new city centre Boundary for St James

The inclusion of what appears to be a completely new city centre map has been the cause of great concern to residents.

The Executive report of 28 April 2026[Agenda item - Exeter City Centre Vision and Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation - Exeter City Council](#) states that the strategy is a non-statutory document with no formal legal status and does not allocate land or impose planning policy. This is also how officers have responded to residents expressing concerns about a new city centre boundary.

What is not being made clear is that the strategy is explicitly linked to and will inform the emerging Exeter Local Plan, and the Local Plan, once adopted, will carry full statutory weight and may override existing policies, including those within adopted Neighbourhood Plans.

It is disingenuous to not explain the link and residents have not been provided with any information to understand the practical implications of the strategy, particularly where it defines a city centre boundary and promotes intensified activity within that area (planning and economic).

It is quite clear that the strategy—and the boundary that is set out within it has the potential to significantly influence future planning decisions and policy interpretation, thereby having significant impact on the Neighbourhood Plan. This impact is not in any way adequately explained anywhere – either in the consultation survey, the background documents and nor have the ward Cllrs been made aware.

To provide some background detail the Exeter St James Community Trust submitted evidence to the examiners that the Exeter Plan contains an erroneous map of the city centre boundary: the map the officers used within the Exeter Plan submission shows the city centre extended into St James. Officers responded to this and denied that this was the case the Trust has been allowed to submit further detailed evidence to support its submission that the map is wrong and this evidence was viewed by the examiners as germane to the soundness of the Plan.

Given that the Exeter Plan is still with the examiners and that the pressing issue of the boundary of the city centre in relation to St James has not been resolved, residents have been left deeply concerned to see the City Centre Strategy launched with a city centre map that proposes even further boundary changes taking in the St James's neighbourhood hub at the junction of Well St and York Rd, St Sidwell's School, parts of the faith community premises, local retailers and cafes. Queen's Crescent Gardens which is managed by the Trust, Howell Rd, the Howell Rd car park, and Pennsylvania Rd as far as Hillsborough Ave. In addition, other residential streets are included, adjacent to Old Tiverton Rd, and around Bury Meadow.

The boundaries set out in both the Exeter Plan and in the City Centre Strategy are in direct conflict with the St James Neighbourhood Plan. When the St James Neighbourhood Plan was adopted, **the examiner stated clearly that the City Centre and St James were adjacent but not overlapping.**

This means that the claim that the city centre boundary has been in place since 2005 simply cannot be true and also irrelevant as the Neighbourhood plan was adopted in 2013 and would have superseded any previous plan.

The complete disregard for St James as a neighbourhood in its own right seems to be completely at odds with the Exeter Plans Liveable Exeter Principles which highlight the importance of the city's existing neighbourhoods and the need to strengthen these.

The new proposed boundary runs through The St James Community Hub, and we feel it is important to highlight that the Exeter Plan gives a list of 15 local centres but inexplicably omits St James – the only local centre in Exeter with a **statutory designation**. It is not hard to see why residents in St James have little trust in the decisions made by the Council.

We have listed the concerns that we and residents have below and would ask that Officers consider those concerns carefully and provide a full response to residents and the 3 ward Cllrs. We also attach in **appendix 4** a list of concerns sent to Officers from residents at the time of our submission 28/06/26. We are aware that further representations will be received by officers before the deadline and ask that all of these are published and responded to.

Concerns raised around planning and an implied "soft boundary"

Residents are raising serious concerns that the Council want to turn St James into the much talked about student quarter.

They are very concerned that a new city centre boundary will be used as a way of justifying further student accommodation in St James – as highlighted above the council has been very clear that the city centre is a priority for student housing, whilst student residents are welcomed in St James, this part of the city has had to accommodate most of the student population, it cannot accommodate further student housing without serious risk of permanently damaging community balance.

Further concerns around student accommodation are raised in that the city centre strategy boundary takes in Howell Road car park – there can be no other reason than to consider it as a future site for development – whilst the trust and residents would support affordable housing for local residents, there are serious concerns that council would seek to use this site for student accommodation or Co-living (also known as student accommodation by stealth)

Council Officers have stated that the boundary is ***"a soft city centre boundary was defined for the strategic purpose, which was rooted in historic geography, four key gateways, movement routes, and key assets (parks, heritage buildings, connections"***

The term “soft boundary” has no basis in statute, licensing Act’s or regulations, or national planning policy, nor is it a recognised form of designation within the statutory planning system.

It is a deliberately vague term, and it is unclear what weight should be afforded to it, how it is intended to operate in practice, or how it differs from a formal policy boundary. In the absence of a clear definition, there is a risk that the boundary functions in practice as a spatial planning designation—guiding development expectations and decision-making—without being subject to the statutory processes, examination, and safeguards that apply to formally adopted planning policies.

It seems to indicate that the council could use it when it suits their purpose – such as for planning purposes allowing PBSAs to be built in areas that the council designates as city centre in its soft boundary (St James) or for nighttime economy use – allowing late licensing or evening events to take place in residential areas.

The proposed new boundary takes in a number of streets covered by article 4 – what impact will this have if they are classified as city centre? what impact will this have on surrounding streets? For example, Prospect Park will be entirely surrounded by an area classified as city centre.

Although described as non-statutory, the City Centre Strategy:

- Defines a geographic boundary,
- Promotes specific land-use outcomes (including increased activity, extended hours, and intensified economic use), and
- Is intended to guide future investment, planning decisions, and delivery mechanisms.

We believe that this presents a clear risk that it will function in practice as a material planning consideration or de facto policy framework, despite not being subject to the statutory safeguards applied to Local Plans. This strengthens the need for robust, transparent, and comprehensive consultation, which is not currently achieved in the survey.

Daytime and Nighttime Economy

This is one of the most concerning aspects about the proposed new boundary as this impacts mainly areas that are completely residential.

Residents already have to tolerate the additional term time noise and should have a right to enjoy their home and have peace and quiet during sleeping hours.

A strong community set of events and activities already exist in the ward with residents arranging local events. There are concerns about late night noise from pubs given extended opening hours, further events in local parks or at the Football club. There are also associated issues with students who return home late at night in large groups causing serious noise issues to residents— this could only be exacerbated further by later openings.

St James is home to many vulnerable residents who live in hostels – many will have issues with addiction, as with many of the issues that have failed to be addressed in St James due to the lack of reporting and knowledge of how many vulnerable hostels/HMOS/bedsits etc it is hard to know exactly how many vulnerable people live in St James. the very last thing we should be considering in St James is anything related to alcohol in terms of nighttime economy when people are trying to recover from serious addictions.

The mosque must also be given consideration too – it now sits in the new boundary along with St Sidwells School.

Our local, independent cafes and restaurants and small businesses are valued by residents and thriving. Residents rely on them and they are a fantastic and diverse addition to our neighbourhood. A change in

city centre boundary could cause an increase in rent, insurance, they could be subject to paying a BID levy and eventually business rates increase. This would make it impossible for most to survive.

Pennsylvania Road, Hillsborough Avenue, St James' Road, Oxford Road, Old Tiverton Road and Toronto Road, as well as many smaller roads, streets, and avenues all residential., there is nothing of economic interest in any of these roads. Again, these roads cannot, by any measure be deemed representative of a city centre and the strategy and needs of these areas would be dramatically inconsistent with the demands of the high street.

Heritage and conservation areas

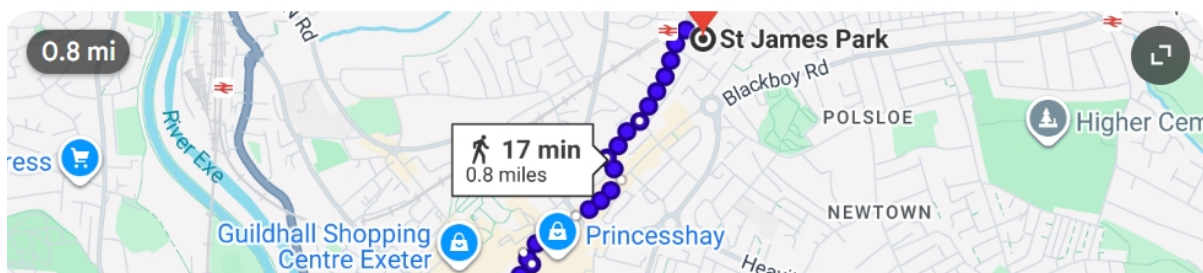
St James has a number of local heritage sites, listed buildings and conservation areas, its architecture is mainly Victorian and Georgian, it has a number of areas that are of architectural or historic interest. What will happen to these areas going forward and how can we ensure that they will be protected.

Wildlife and nature

We have green spaces in St James and residents take great care to maintain their gardens. We have Queens Park Gardens, Bury Meadow Park and Horseguards park, the orchard in Devonshire Place, the lovely residents garden in Powderham Crescent, the well-known tree lined street of Prosect Park. We are lucky enough to have bats, badgers, foxes, insects, and a wide variety of wild birds. Most importantly we have breeding hedgehogs and swifts, both protected species. A lot of building work, an increase in student housing, late-night noise and light pollution would without doubt put the population of these protected creatures in jeopardy.

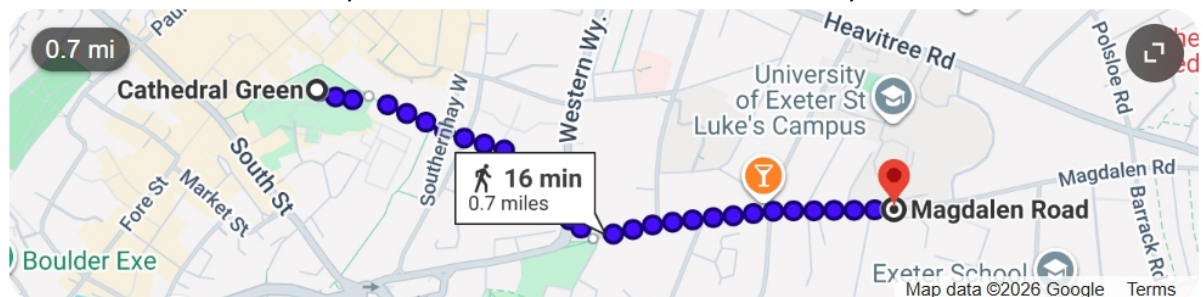
Residents sense of connection to the city centre

The proposed boundary extends all the way to the football stadium and St James Park. The strategy states that it is focussed on areas that are a 10-minute walk from Cathedral Green



As shown in the picture St James Park Football Stadium is at least a 17-minute walk away. Whilst we understand the economic importance of the football club it cannot reasonably be described as part of the city centre, and it is also proud to be located in St James – hence its name!

We agree with a resident who has noted that Magdalen Road with its shopping area and cafes and restaurants has not been included but St James has – it is a 16-minute walk from Cathedral Green. We would like to understand why St James has been included and other key areas have not.



Residents who live in St James do not identify as living in the city centre at all – we have spoken to a number of residents over the last few weeks who are all very perplexed at how areas that are entirely

residential are suddenly drawn into a new city centre boundary that seems to have no purpose to anyone other than the council.

We can also find no specific reference to the inclusion of St James in any documents – the recent Cllr briefing on the City Centre Strategy makes no reference to the football stadium or Bury Meadow – despite officers now claiming that they are included due to their economic importance.

To summarise

The strategy's definition of the city centre outlined in the proposed boundary pays no regard to economic activity, residential neighbourhoods and land usage, but also disregards simple geography and common sense.

The proposed boundary of the city centre set out in the City Centre Strategy is incorrect with regards the areas of St James it designates as city centre and contravenes the St James Neighbourhood plan.

More broadly the strategy has attempted to bring in many areas of the wider city to form a much bigger city centre – all of these areas are vastly beyond the stated 10-minute walk from Cathedral Green, St Davids for example and even the Quay would take more than 10 minutes for most people!

People that live in and work in all these areas have their own unique identify – just as St James residents do -There is simply no way a single strategy can be relevant to all of these parts of the Exeter. Instead, applying the same policies, directives and priorities to these areas will be massively disruptive to the communities within them and at best this will be a "One size doesn't quite fit anyone" approach, and at worst it will impose the needs of the few upon the many, leading to homogeneity that undermines the very nature of the city and the people that live and work within it.

St James residents in particular have been ignored and treated poorly for far too long, a recent example has been the planning permission granted to the King Billy site on Longbrook Street where money was allocated for green spaces to Rougemont Gardens (not in St James) when Queens Park Gardens (managed by the St James Trust) is just moments away from the development – sadly this is a regular occurrence for St James, it receives no investment – it has had no CIL money yet it is expected to take in most of the student population of Exeter.

St James has its own identity – it is much more than an area known for students, . We are home to the city's football stadium, places of worship such the mosque, local businesses and an array of cafes and restaurants.

We have a fantastic diverse community of residents, many of whom have called St James home for decades. They are proud to live here and work in their respective communities. Our residents come from all walks of life and work in many varied professions. They are welcoming, creative, and enterprising, they support local small businesses, they create their own events and community activities

We have thriving green spaces such as Queens Crescent Gardens, Bury Meadow. Horseguards, the gardens at Powderham Crescent, tree lined Prospect Park and the orchard at Devonshire Place. We have beautiful housing stock and well cared for allotments and gardens creating natural green corridors in many of our roads

The St James Community Trust do a fantastic job of supporting the wider St James community and deserve to be treated respectfully. We do not feel that they have been – in respect of this and more broadly from the council.

Our residents are rightfully concerned about the proposed new boundary that will remove much of the place they live in and reframe it as the city centre – they have a right to ask what is happening, what this means for their futures and why they have not been properly consulted.

As the ward Cllrs we must also ask the same questions of Officers – and ask why we have not been consulted – or even why after receiving many objections from residents over the last few weeks Officers

have not even attempted to reach out to us to understand why residents may be so concerned and what action could be taken.

We will leave you with a final comment from one resident who rightly summed up feeling of St James residents wondering why every other part of Exeter seems to be treated more respectfully than we are.

“An Exeter Citizen magazine just arrived I am reading page 7 about the pride of place programme designed to put residents at the centre of decision making, ensuring that investment represents the needs, ideas and ambitions of local people, they put the words into our mouths”.

Cllr Kevin Mitchell (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Council Group)

Cllr Michael Mitchell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Council Group)

Cllr Tammy Palmer