

PLANNING

Date: Monday 4 August 2025

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Mark Devin, Democratic Services Manager on 01392 265477.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -

Councillors Knott (Chair), Rolstone (Deputy Chair), Asvachin, Atkinson, Banyard, Bennett, Harding, Hughes, Hussain, Ketchin, Mitchell, M, Williams, M and Pole

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

8 Update Sheet

To consider the report of the Strategic Director for Place.

(Pages 3 -
8)

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Planning Committee will be held on **Monday 8 September 2025** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

4th August 2025

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Correspondence received and matters arising following preparation of the Agenda

Item 5: 24/1536/OUT Land Adjacent Marsh Barton Railway Station, Clapperbrook Lane East, Exeter, EX2 8QE.

On 31 July, the agent submitted the following response to the objection from Cllr Moore:

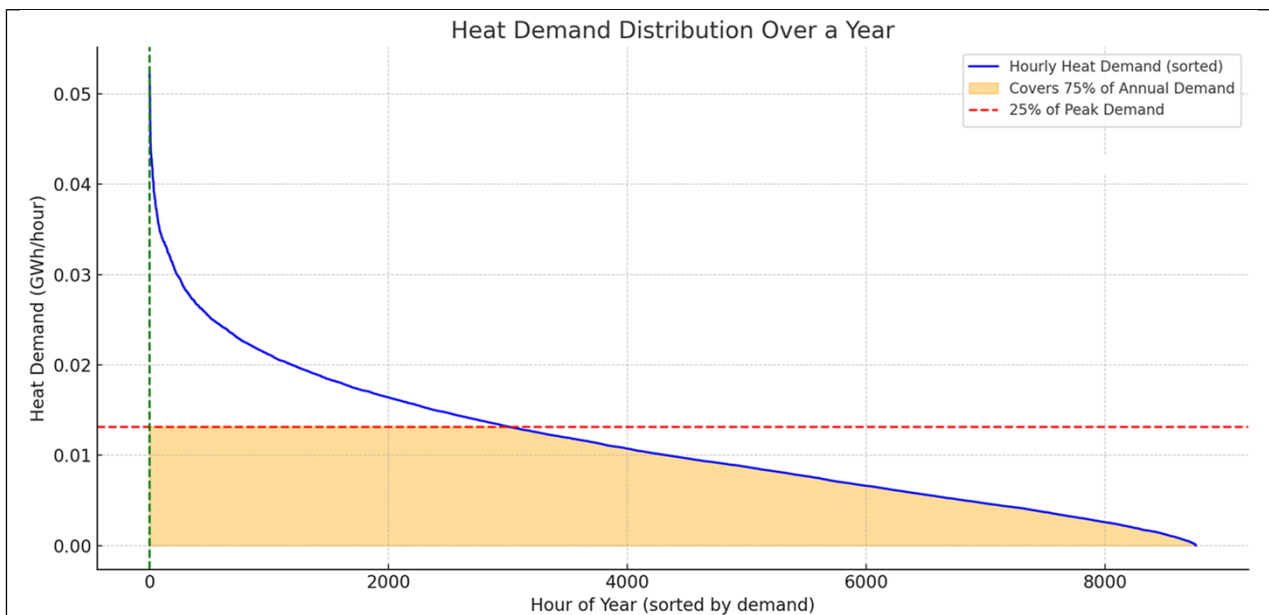
“The applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated how the Energy Centre will support the delivery of CP14 (and CC1 and CC2 of the new draft policy) for developments within Exeter allowing for a transition towards Net Zero.

a. The *heat output* from the Energy Centre sets out how the heat generated will produce “Carbon savings of at least 13,000 tonnes per year with the potential to increase significantly. 75% emissions reduction from day one for customers replacing gas boilers with a network connection. Improved air quality by reducing use of gas boilers.” These figures relate *only to the recipient buildings*; they *do not relate to the energy source used to generate the heat*. Indeed they lock in gas generation carbon emissions for the lifetime of the boilers into the 2040’s.

The assertion in this comment is incorrect. 75% emissions reductions are based at the Energy Centre, which in turn applies to our customers.

The Energy strategy for the EEN relies on a maximum of 25% of our heat coming from gas boilers. The majority of this is at peak demand on coldest days. 75% of our heat will come from Air Source Heat Pumps, powered by zero carbon electricity (with certificates to show origin of the electricity). It is theoretically possible to power the whole energy network with 100% low carbon technology, however sizing this to cover the highest demands would be (a) hugely expensive to install and run), and (b) not viable because the electricity grid in Exeter doesn’t have anywhere near enough capacity.

Through sizing our low carbon heat generation at 25% of peak demand we can serve 75% of total heat demand in the most cost effective manner possible:



e. There is **no evidence in the sustainability appraisal setting out the operational greenhouse gas emissions when the plant is in use.** The applicant states the energy centre will secure: “Energy resilience through secure, local, low-carbon heat sources”, yet the applicant has changed the water source heat pumps to air source heat pumps, with gas back up boilers without providing evidence of the greenhouse gas(GHG) emissions that these models will generate to back up the low-carbon assertion.

Please see the response above in relation to GHG emissions. Our plan was always to have gas boilers for peak and back-up generation in order to create a project that can deliver decarbonisation at scale in the most economically viable way. The change in heat pump technology is driven by choosing the most deliverable scheme but water source heat pumps remain an option for the future. We are allowing space within our planning application for a future WSHP building.

The Air Pollution reports assumes the gas boilers operate on a continual basis, for 660 operating hours per annum for five boilers and as such produce 26,402 MWh/40MW. However, “five gas reserve boilers are proposed which will be used when the ASHPs cannot operate (although only four will operate at any one time) and two emergency generators are proposed to provide power to the energy centre in the event of an electricity supply failure.”

Yes this is correct. See both responses above. At peak times we will need to run gas boilers to be able to meet peak demand for the customers. We also require gas boilers to provide critical resilience for customers such as the hospital and university. The Exeter Energy Network will reduce NOx emissions by 90% compared to individual gas boilers through a mix of (1) 75% reduction in gas use, as described above, and (2) using the newest clean-burning gas boilers for the remaining 25% of our heat.

The GHG emissions of this gas consumption (and the electricity needed for the ASHP/other sources) are not calculated.

This is not correct. Gas consumption is included within the emissions savings provided. Please see above

f. Further information should be required from the developers showing the GHG emissions created by the Plant to evidence the 'low carbon' assertion and in order to demonstrate compliance with new Local Plan Policy CC1 and Exeter's Net Zero 2030 priority set out in the emerging Local Plan.

Please see above

g. A condition should be put in place for annual reporting to the Council on GHG production by the plant, and a timeframe with agreed and conditioned milestone for moving to Net Zero 2030 in line with the Local Plan Policy CC1 & CC2.

We will be reporting annual GHG production and savings to all customers and are happy to extend this to the Council.

We will also be contractually bound by anchor load customers to present a costed decarbonisation trajectory. Depending on the emissions reduction approach and timeframes there may be an additional cost to customers. Therefore we cannot commit to decarbonisation timeframes and milestones to the council, as the decision will ultimately rest with anchor load customers.

It should be noted however, that the network will need to be able to demonstrate net zero heat provision in line with anchor load customer decarbonisation targets. We also expect heat networks regulation to mandate increasingly strict decarbonisation targets of all heat network providers.

h. There is no evidence in the sustainability appraisal setting of the greenhouse gas emissions created in construction. Heat loss from the building will have a local impact on the local ecology and increase GHG emissions. Much of the floor area is not a manned area, so isn't heated, and will passively heat itself due to the operation of the process - no further heating will be provided.

A Condition should be put on the development to require the highest level of construction standard in order to minimise heat loss and maximise sustainability.

1Energy is in the business of selling heat. We are therefore highly incentivised to minimise heat loss and maximise sustainability

With regards to the queries about the BNG calculation and whether the access track has had an impact on the calculation, we have reviewed this and provided the evidence that the access does not change the result at all (see attached).

We can also confirm that the badger setts are not within the application site."

On 31 July, the following objection was received from Mr Martin Stapleton. Accordingly, the number of objections has risen from 12 to 13.

"Dear Councillors, Planning officers,

I failed to comment on the planning application due to missing the notification of this application. If possible, I would be very grateful for the councillors and/or the planning consultation to mention/consider my views.

Name : Martin Stapleton

Address : 118 Cowick Lane, EX29HE

Status : Regular user of the area for walking, cycling and running

View : Object to application

Summary : I would have objected to the original proposal, based on the clear violation of the Riverside and Ludwell Valley Parks Masterplan. Whilst the original plan could have created a (debatable) environmental argument for this violation, the current plan does not - it is simply the building of a factory on a greenfield site that has been previously marked for protection, when there are many more suitable locations - and it is precisely the kind of creeping development that the Masterplan was intended to prevent.

Detail :

Alteration/Falsification of Proposals

From the outset, the main pillar of the proposal has been the necessity to site the development beside the river, so as to extract/replace water from the river Exe. This is no longer in the application (except for reference to possible future development), and therefore there is absolutely no justification for using this location. This could be characterised as a change of plans by the developer - but it could also be characterised as a complete falsification of those plans to justify the use of a greenfield site that is cheap and easy for them to develop.

'Public' consultation

In August 2024, the public consultation stated "The comments received on the plans through feedback forms were predominantly positive, highlighting several key benefits. Respondents appreciated the heat network as a whole, praising its potential environmental benefits, including carbon reductions and improvements to river and aquatic life." - however, it is clear that at that point that there were many misleading points in the publicity :

- Their public presentation (second exhibition panel) states "A water source heat pump will take heat from the River Exe". As this is no longer the proposal, the public consultation is completely invalid
- Every source (press releases etc) states the heat source will be water from the river Exe . As this is no longer the proposal, the public consultation is completely invalid
- Every source states the development is next to the Solar Park, and Marsh Barton Station. I have found no mention anywhere of the Valley parks. This is incredibly disingenuous - possibly it could be called a lie by omission.
- Leaflets distributed. I live on Cowick Lane, in one of the specified areas, and I did not receive one.
- " Six feedback forms were received in total." - this is indicative of the appalling reach of the public consultation - the target of the consultation was apparently 13,000 people!?

Gateway to the Valley Parks

In the Valley Parks Masterplan pp43, it says "Island Parks is soon to benefit from the Devon Metro Project, which will bring a train station to Marsh Barton, alongside Clapperbrook Lane, and provides significant opportunity for the area to develop as a main gateway to the Valley Parks", and proposes "The space is a key place for woodland planting". This planning application instead proposes to make the main gateway to the Valley Parks a large industrial building housing computer servers and gas boilers - it makes a mockery of the Masterplan.

Visibility and Audibility from Valley Park, and Canal Path

In the 'landscape and visual appraisal' document, it states (Viewpoint 2) : "During winter months, there is a greater extent of visibility into the Site through gaps between tree trunks, providing a greater sense of openness. This results in more prominent views of the Energy Recovery Facility and the Clapperbrook Lane East bridge over the railway corridor. The prevailing amenity of the view remains, however there is a greater appreciation of being in proximity to the urban area to the west. The sensitivity of receptors at this location is judged to be High." - Read simply this says that the development will be clearly visible from the valley park clearly in late autumn, winter and early spring. Further, the canal path will be dominated in that area by both the view of, and noise from, the development.

This document also states (section 6.4) : "During both construction and operation there would be a notable change to the character of the Site. The implementation of built form alongside formal access and fencing would add urbanising characteristics across approximately 50% of the Site. Around Clapperbrook Lane East there would be some removal of existing trees and vegetation to the north and south, resulting in a more open character for this area of the Site. (...). There would be a reduction in the landscape tranquillity of the Site resulting from visual and noise disturbance..." -> this is actually damning - there will be significant visual and noise disturbance to the area described by the Masterplan as a main Gateway to the Valley Parks.

To be clear, the statement "The sensitivity of receptors at this location is judged to be High." is defined on page 31 of that document -> "Value or character is recognised through national or local designation" and "Little capacity to accommodate development of the same type, scale and appearance as the Proposed Development." How the report concludes that this would only affect visual amenity with "Minor Adverse magnitude" is beyond me, as someone who walks past there regularly - although I would argue that even this degree of effect is too much for a site that is meant to be the gateway to the Valley Parks.

Water Lane development planning

One of the main points stated in the 2024 report on "Liveable Water Lane" was "Establish the area around Marsh Barton station as a regional destination for recreation and water-related activities." - it is possible to pretend that this development improves nature by claiming an increase in biodiversity (although this is a pathetic assertion when juxtaposed to the potential benefits of using the whole site as a biodiversity development, or even just leaving the area as a wild area) - but it is not possible to claim that this development would not massively degrade the potential of the area as a centre for leisure, recreation and the environment. If there was, for example, to be a watersports centre in the future - the obvious site would be by the railway station - any other location would have a direct negative impact on the Valley park.

Further to this, the outline planning for the Water Lane development does not show any intent to connect to this development. That implies that there is _no connection_ of this development proposed on the West of the river, thus invalidating the proposed location further.

I hope that these points/opinions are of use.

Kind regards,

Martin Stapleton”