

**COUNCIL**  
**(HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING)**

**MINUTE EXTRACT**

21 July 2020

**Present:-**

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Peter Holland (Lord Mayor)  
Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Deputy Lord Mayor)  
Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Buswell, Foale, Foggin, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D, Lamb, Leadbetter, Lyons, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Moore, J, Morse, Newby, Oliver, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Martin, A, Quance, I, Sheldon, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright

26

**PETITION - SAVE OUR HISTORIC EXETER**

The Lord Mayor invited Andy Robinson, the petition organiser, to present a petition of 2,081 signatories on “Save Our Historic Exeter”.

Mr Robinson stated that:-

- more than 4,200 people have signed a petition titled “Please help us stop developers destroying the city centre” with more than 2,000 having also signed from the EX area which is why this petition qualifies for discussion here;
- the petition asks Exeter City Council to put on hold any significant new developments that effect heritage assets that are not governed by existing policy and for which the City Council has not conducted a needs assessment until the appropriate research and policies are in place;
- it also asks that the Council urgently puts additional resources into the research and development of these polices and to ensure that the approval of historic bodies is gained before buildings are validated for public consultation;
- these policies are needed as, without them, developers will find it far easier to build something that maximises their own profits at the expense of the city, its heritage and citizens;
- the research and policies that are needed are a Housing Needs Assessment, backed by detailed in depth research, research backed policies for every kind of development, including co-living, detailed policies for development in conservation areas including maximum height and mass of buildings, detailed policies for permanent, affordable, sustainable housing and a detailed assessment of the need for a range of student accommodation from affordable to luxury, urgent assessment of infrastructure levies and policies for the protection of green spaces and trees;
- during the process of the Harlequins planning application, it became clear to Exeter residents that there are huge gaps in planning policy and we have seen many buildings going up without any respect for historic Exeter,

bringing no public benefit and only benefiting investors who are, in most cases, not based in our city and many not even in the UK. Developers have money to pay for the historic assessments, light surveys, noise surveys and sustainability surveys and Exeter City Council, it seems, does not have the resources to give them proper scrutiny;

- developers' claims and conclusions therefore have to be taken at face value and, inevitably, what is proposed is overwhelmingly about profit. It is not concerned about protecting Exeter, its heritage and its long term vision and it certainly is not about benefitting the people who live here;
- thousands of people who signed the petition want to say – "Stop and find out what is needed, find out what is wanted, create policies to take control of what is allowed and what is not, listen to the people who live and work here and those who visit. We have a right to influence our own environment and we expect it to be improved and not destroyed. Do not build more short term developments that make money for those who already have it and brings nothing to those who have real needs";
- the city's prime real estate should be used to create structures with flair and imagination, with world class architecture and visionary thinking worthy of a historically important city;
- it is believed that the Council lacks the resources to deal with the threat of international developers taking advantage of poor polices, so applications in the pipeline should be put on hold where there is not enough independent evidence or information about whether these developments are actually needed or coherent with the Local Plan;
- in respect of co-living, Manchester has quickly responded with a report saying that it will not support it as a response to the housing crisis. There are at least two applications of co-living pending in Exeter but no report into the issue;
- it is assumed that the Council has detailed evidence that co-living will work in Exeter, evidence which should be shared; and
- with a petition of over 4,000, with support on Facebook, it is requested that a group of Exeter residents, historians and local business representatives from Save Our Historic Exeter be formed to be kept up to date on the activities associated with this debate.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr Robinson for clarifying that there were only 2,081 signatories with an Exeter postcode. The Lord Mayor stated that it was not appropriate for the Council to debate the petition due to the reference to the live Harlequins planning application and proposed that the petition be referred to the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council's petition scheme. The proposal was supported.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr Robinson for the presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the petition be referred to the Planning Committee.