



Friends of Exeter Ship Canal

Exeter: A Heritage Harbour

Response by the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal to the Full Draft of the Exeter Plan and the Exeter Vision 2040

Introduction and explanation of our response

1. The purpose of this response is to pull together the case for Exeter Ship Canal and Basin figuring more prominently in the Full Draft Plan.
2. We urge the City Council to recognise two points:
 - the Canal and Basin will contribute to the objectives of the Full Draft Plan
 - the full range of opportunities this offers the Plan's delivery will be lost unless the nature of the Canal and Basin is recognised for inclusion and consideration in the Plan.

3. The Canal and its Basin are under the direct control of the City Council. They give an opportunity for generations of people living in Exeter to enjoy benefits, that are widely recognised today, that a waterway can bring to improving people's lives.

These include improved health and wellbeing; new interests and skills; training and the economy; achievement of net zero; active and connected communities; and new ways to connect with heritage and culture. Exeter has the opportunity to be among the leaders in future inland waterway management in these respects.

4. The Full Draft Plan, with its full set of planning policies, should also recognise that the body of water that forms the Exeter Ship Canal is dependent in terms of its character and use on the uses of the land bordering it. What happens on this land indelibly affects the waterway's ability to function to full capacity. This vital point is often missed.

5. At the high level of strategy of the Full Draft Plan, we are not over-egging the importance of the Canal and Basin. It can help shape and deliver the Plan but obviously only as one constituent of all that will make the city a 'liveable' place now and for the future. We ask that omissions in the Draft are redressed to give the wide-ranging contributions of the Canal and Basin status among considerations of the city's future. This will ensure that developments take account of them, as they must of other factors. The multiple contributions of the waterway can only be realised if the future of the canal and basin network is well planned.

6. Key contributions of the Canal and Basin map onto the content of the Full Draft Plan. We are not suggesting that the Canal and Basin should be referenced by name at all these points but indicating that the waterway's place as a shaping factor in Exeter's future should be planned for. It will not involve major rewording of the Draft, and where we believe a specific reference to the Canal and Basin will be helpful we generally suggest a draft.

7. The extent of Exeter's waterway covers the Port of Exeter as a whole, from the coast and Exe Estuary including the port of Topsham, through Turf Lock and along the 5.2 miles of the Ship Canal to the City Basin, and the canalside buildings. The

Ship Canal and the Basin at its head are therefore integral to a connected and functional network.

We urge the Council to consider and accept the strategic case for including the Canal and Basin among the drivers that will achieve the Exeter Vision.

Comments on the Full Draft Plan section by section

Sections 1 & 2: Explaining the Exeter Plan and This is our city, this is our future

Paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 As the main planning policy document for Exeter for the next 20 years, to be used to make decisions on planning applications (1.2), the Plan should acknowledge the special case of the vulnerability of the Canal and Basin to planning applications for nearby land. Given the contributions the working waterway and basin make to the Plan's objectives in shaping Exeter's future over the same period, it is vital this point is not missed. It is now widely accepted that waterways today can bring:

Economic Benefits: contributing to local economies, encouraging new business growth and investment, increasing spend in local communities, and reducing pressures on social care and the NHS.

Protecting and Enhancing Natural and Built Environment: a blue-green corridor for wildlife and biodiversity; accessible heritage everyone can understand and use; new life and protection for the waterfronts and their history; planning for sustainability and net zero through new research and waterborne transport modes and minimising carbon emissions.

Inclusive Communities: contributing to great places to live, work, be active and take leisure; opportunities open to people of all abilities for new connections with the water, new interests and acquiring new skills.

Access to understanding and learning: an outdoor 'classroom' for natural and social history for school-aged children and intergenerational groups; innovative opportunities for employment, training and apprenticeships for jobs from boat building and related crafts to water environment and boat design; a laboratory and test-bed for academic research into water and biodiversity management and clean energy for propulsion.

Making lives better: fantastic range of affordable activities encouraging people of all abilities and ages to be active afloat and along the waterside; boost to long-term physical and mental health from access and connection with a working waterway.

City and waterway culture: Exeter Ship Canal and Basin are part of the historic Port of Exeter and maritime background; the city's blue route from the sea to the city centre; a rich artistic and cultural offering; and a social and industrial heritage of national importance. The designation of Heritage Harbour reinigorates the cultural contribution for the future. Exeter would not be Exeter without the working canal.

All the foregoing map directly onto the Exeter Vision 2040 and the outcomes that drive the Exeter Plan.

Section 3: Spatial strategy

This section should make the connections between land development and water use. There should be guidance that decisions on planning applications to develop sites adjacent to, or which have an impact on, the canal and basin should not compromise future multiple beneficial uses of the waterway, including new carbon reducing waterborne and water-related commercial uses, and the benefits of Heritage Harbour status.

An additional clause is suggested in S1: Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy):

- **Enabling development and delivery of the full capacity of Exeter Ship Canal and Basin and the Heritage Harbour designation to support Exeter's needs**

Liveable Exeter principles (3.10-3.18)

3.16 A multi-functioning canal and basin is not in conflict with any of the Liveable Exeter principles and can be accommodated in delivering planned, mixed use quality development of brownfield land.

3.17 A waterway masterplan by the City Council, developed in conjunction with the Harbour Board/Port of Exeter, that underpins and clarifies this innovative approach is recommended. It requires a necessary holistic approach, not one left to piecemeal approaches by developers.

S2 Liveable Exeter principles (Strategic policy)

Exeter can add to its vision and Plan for 2040 a valuable and highly enviable element as a forward looking waterway city that connects centuries-old maritime background to its principles and vision of a liveable city. This needs to be signposted as a specific planning element in the strategy because the composite contributions of Exeter's maritime assets are not automatically obvious.

In S2, Liveable Exeter principles (Strategic policy) the following are suggested:

Principle 1: Memorable places – Bullet point 2: substitute 'waterways' for 'watercourses'.

Principle 2: Outstanding quality – Bullet point 2: add 'waterway use' to the list.

Principle 5: Active streets – Bullet point 2: insert a comma after 'key destinations' and add: 'maximising connectivity with the canal and basin wherever possible'.

Principle 6: Spaces for people and wildlife – First bullet point: reorder after 'including the' to read, 'Green Circle and blue-green corridors of the Valley Parks and Ship Canal.'

Principle 7: Connected Culture – Final bullet point: insert the words 'maritime assets' after 'rich heritage' so it reads: 'Harness Exeter's rich heritage, maritime assets, local identities and creative talent ...' etc.

Section 4: Climate change

Adapting to climate change and the implications of achieving net zero involve creating new ways of thinking, acting and moving about, as the Full Draft acknowledges. Maximizing the multi-contributions that the city of Exeter's usable waterway – the canal – would make to the new pattern for Exeter is not signposted among strategic options. We think this omission is a mistake. While the importance of 'green infrastructure' is acknowledged in paragraph 4.8, the Ship Canal is not 'green' infrastructure but a historic, place-defining structure with a continuing role to play in the change to climate-conscious living.

Examples of its economic contributions to a better environment include piloting the canal as a test bed for transformational academic research, for example into aquatic biodiversity and renewable, emission-free energy for propulsion and environmental protection; cutting emissions through developing waterborne freight and commercial transport, particularly to benefit supply chains for locally produced cargoes; creating carbon zero transport links for local pedestrians and tourists to parks, footpaths and other destinations; and introducing opportunities for attracting low-carbon water-related commerce and business, both hi-tech and traditionally craft based.

Innovatively, canal water where available can be used to heat and cool buildings. Defensively, the canal also has a role in the city's general, long-term flood resistance to the effects of rises in sea level because of climate change.

It is suggested an additional short umbrella paragraph is inserted after paragraph 4.8 on p. 20 to reflect these continuing contributions in general terms.

A new bullet point is suggested for CC1: Net zero Exeter (Strategic policy):

- **Exploring opportunities to link new developments to use of the canal and basin as part of solutions to minimise carbon emissions at design and delivery stages.**

Embodied carbon (4.24-4.27)

In relation to new building and brownfield developments, the canal is an alternative corridor for transport of building and repair materials and heavy machinery, which could reduce the length of exhaust-producing journeys on roads. Embodied carbon would also be reduced by working with contractors and others in the supply chain generally to develop ideas for water transport that reduce polluting emissions.

An additional bullet point is suggested for CC6: Embodied carbon:

- **Adequate steps have been taken to consider waterborne transport to mitigate adverse impacts of construction and site preparation.**

Every little will count over the coming decades in the long-term campaign of exploration and re-thinking that will underpin Exeter's move to net zero.

It is too early to leave out references to the potentiality of Exeter's green and usable water corridor. Strategies need to be inclusive and indicative at this stage.

Section 5: Homes

The Water Sports Association headquarters and adjoining buildings and boat storage hardstanding at the Canal Basin have been zoned for housing to help meet Government housing requirements for Exeter.

We believe water-related and maritime functions are the prime importance at the Canal Basin. Accessible water sport is one of Exeter's essential active community offerings.

Housing could be a modest part of development of the water sports site which must improve current water sports facilities. The housing should be viable and provide some affordable homes.

The water sports site includes some modest, traditional vernacular buildings that give character to the area and should be considered for preservation and re-purposing. Building over an area of hardstanding will permanently take out hardstanding space at the basin which at present can be used for boat storage. Today's limited ability to offer services to maritime visitors and the consequent economic viability of the canal and basin, and the overall attractiveness and useability for boat owners, would be reduced further.

This is relevant to Full Draft, Section 5, because the waterway network of the Basin and Ship Canal is a component of Liveable Exeter's objectives for life in the city and its neighbourhoods, not to be thought of as only a backdrop for new homes or a pastime.

The need for sustainable and attractive housing has never been greater and the imperative is recognised. An alternative but complementary context for judgement is to consider the contemporary benefits of the heritage harbour's legacy, and the long-term benefits that working regeneration of the canal and basin will bring to the lives, health and engagement of generations of Exeter citizens at large. The fascination and vibrancy of boats and boating bustle will connect with residents and visitors. We believe this is in the public interest. The Draft asserts, 'Planning is concerned with the control of land use in the public interest.'

H13: Housing density and size mix (Strategic policy)

An addition is suggested to 'b':

v. The impact or its mitigation of the proposed development on existing or other desirable waterway uses.

Section 6: Economy and jobs: Visions & Objective

Regeneration of the Ship Canal and Basin will help deliver the 2040 Exeter Vision's aspirations for increased prosperity and reputation for extending inspired innovation through access to new sectors and quality training for skills in new areas of job and personal development.

The canal creates particular opportunities and educational connections for Exeter that are not replicable everywhere, for creativity in the future of waterways, and in jobs and skills training in the latest technologies and traditional crafts of boat design, construction and restoration, and in environment management: new creativities that will transform an old setting.

This needs to be referenced in an additional bullet point under 'Transformational sectors'.

EJ1: Economic growth in the transformational sectors (Strategic policy)

It is suggested adding the following to the list of the transformational sectors to be supported:

- **Innovative waterway regeneration, management and commerce;**

Access to jobs and skills (6.12-6.16)

A fully used canal and basin have significant potential to contribute to the Full Draft's educational vision and the objective that economic benefits of jobs, skills and training are widely accessible through up-skilling and re-skilling. Water-related jobs lend themselves particularly to short-term placements at one end of the scale and apprenticeships at the other.

Waterways and water-related jobs make a great place to work and a great place to build a business.

It is suggested that a reference is added under 'Access to jobs and skills' to maximising the employment opportunities of the canal and basin.

Preparation for work and volunteering

Outdoor study and classes based around waterways have been shown to spark young people's interests in STEM subjects such as engineering and science as well as ecology and the environment because they are able to see these disciplines in action along the water.

Community skills training based on the basin and around the canal – for example with links with boat building academies – would develop skills through short courses or linked to qualifications for people of all ages and backgrounds in traditional maritime related crafts such as sail and mast making, carpentry, boat maintenance and metalwork. Engaging people of all ages in important volunteering work connected with the waterway is a strategic aspect of community health and inclusivity in Section 12: 'High quality places and design' (p. 90) and warrants cross-references with Section 13: 'Health and wellbeing'.

EJ4: Access to jobs and skills

Exeter Ship Canal and Basin will support employment and training, and are important to the Exeter Vision as a whole. Major development proposals should be required to show in their Employment and Skills Plan that the waterway has been considered in meeting the required objectives.

Section 7: The future of our high streets

The Exeter Canal Basin is often referred to the City Basin. It is a harbour on the very edge of the inland city centre. Designation as a Heritage Harbour has led to the need for a strategically fresh approach in relation to the city centre itself. Exeter Harbour is a superb city centre amenity every day, during the day and throughout the evening,

that can enhance the vitality of the city centre. It is an addition to the city of culture. It has the potential to become even more connected. Strategically, together with the Quay, it is important to the priority of a prosperous local economy.

7.4 We recommend the Canal Basin is given a priority place in the work on the new city centre strategy. Yet in paragraph 7.5, 'Looking ahead', the value of the water is not mentioned. We do not believe it is in competition with the high streets, but a magnetic attraction complementary as a harbourside is to the seaside town behind it.

Our district and local centres

The recent identification of the Quay and Canal Basin as a local centre (paragraph 7.7) together with Alphington, Burnthouse Lane, Topsham Road–St Leonard's and Countess Wear indicates the different nature of the Basin and Quay. The others are areas that provide a vital range of facilities and services to support their communities. The residential community of the Basin and Quay, though a large one, lives at short distances from all the facilities of the city centre in one direction, and the 'district centre' of St Thomas in the other. The facilities of the Basin and Quay are consequently quite different and more a shared resource for all Exeter's residents. This is an important point for HS1: 'The vitality of our high streets and centres (Strategic policy)':

We urge that the significance of the Quay and Canal Basin – central, city-wide and local – is acknowledged in strategic policy HS1.

Sustainable movement, paragraphs 8.2-8.6 & STC1 (Strategic policy)

In line with the objective of maximising sustainable transport, the city centre must be connected so people can reach it easily. We believe it is vital to improve access between the city centre and the Quay and Basin. The quayside and basin are Exeter's top visitor attractions—a reason alone for better connectivity between them as part of a strategic policy. The main barrier is the steep hill between the quay and the city centre.

We believe this is an opportunity to act on the Draft's vision of a world-class innovative city with an international challenge to design a visually exciting, efficient and carbon-clean link that makes it easy for people of all abilities to get from one level to the other. There would need to be no immediate timetable for this.

Making a tourist attraction of the link between quay and city centre would bring added economic benefits.

8.4 For comment, see Section 13: 'Health and wellbeing'.

STC1: Sustainable movement (Strategic policy)

We welcome the inclusion of 'f', supporting opportunities for waterborne transport' in the Full Draft. But waterborne transport requires land also, which could be the subject of competing development proposals. We urge once again that the Full Draft should acknowledge that what happens on land close to the canal will affect the waterway's ability to function.

The principle should be laid down that developers should show they have considered the impact or its mitigation of proposed development on existing or desirable waterway uses.

See also the comment on Strategic Policy H13 above.

Transport and new developments, 8.7-8.11

8.8 The objective to maximise sustainable transport and support emergent forms and modes of mobility will not be fulfilled if the Draft ignores the development and potential of electric boats and other forms of clean waterborne propulsion for passenger ferries, and the need for boarding and disembarking facilities. We suggest these figure in paragraph 8.8.

8.10, 8.11 and STC2

The sequential prioritisation of road improvements is understandable in terms of the Plan's overall objective to increase active travel. However, the Plan needs to clarify how it fits with item 'g' of the previous strategic policy, STC1: 'Sustainable movement', of protecting the function of Exeter as a strategic road hub through investments in critical infrastructure – and in particular how the two policies affect the future of Exeter Ship Canal.

The A379, Bridge Road, is integral to maintaining Exeter's strategic role as a regional hub and gateway to the national transport network. The planned replacement of the A379's moveable bridges over the canal at Countess Wear will allow the major road safety gain of pedestrians and cyclists being able to pass under the dual carriageway in safety, while the extra air draught will enable more boats to navigate the canal without the bridges being opened and the road shut. Both will improve connectivity and the environment, particularly as routine halting of traffic at the pedestrian crossings and the extra emissions, will be abolished.

The increased headroom will unlock the canal's potential for waterborne transport allowing all but the tallest craft to travel unimpeded, compared to the currently very limited opportunities when the moveable bridges are opened.

It will be a game changer for the prospects of water buses and taxis, pleasure cruises, visiting craft, local commercial cargoes and the economy of the boatyard and Heritage Harbour. It will become feasible that commercial freight could once again be carried right into the heart of Exeter by sea and the canal in conjunction with such zero-emission schemes as Sail Cargo.

The significance of this for the Plan as a whole is missed as the Draft makes no reference to the strategic importance of preparing fully for this major change in canal navigability and use. We recommend it is written in as an addition to paragraphs 8.10 and 8.11 together with clarity on Exeter's scope as a transport authority as far as it extends to roads. The city should continue its co-operation with Devon County Council on the A379 road and bridges improvement. In STC2, 'local' road improvements should be defined.

8.9 and 8.21 We believe that daytime stopping trains at Marsh Barton should be scheduled half hourly, rather than hourly, to encourage use.

Active travel proposals

8.15 portrays the canal as well as some roads and large junctions, as 'significant barriers' to walking and cycling in Exeter that need to be overcome while making the most of the river and canal in terms of active travel and waterborne transport. Towpaths and existing footbridges are already busy, at times awkwardly, with pedestrians and cyclists. It is imperative strategically to improve accessibility and safety for increasing numbers, so that pedestrians, children and pushchairs, and people with disabilities, as well as cyclists, can make safe and sustainable transport choices. Various ways have been suggested including separate 'express' cycleways. It is not only new development that must be taken into account but knock-on impacts of active travel on usage of existing paths.

The stretch of towpath leading to Marsh Barton Station past brownfield development at Water Lane needs especially sensitive handling to retain its character because it will become a pedestrian and cycle commuter route.

Any new or replacement bridges across the Ship Canal should have headroom above the water level no less than the new A379 road bridges, and should be electrically operated swing bridges designed for boater operation. Fixed bridges are no longer possible. They would require an air draught no less than that of the M5 bridge.

STC3: Supporting active travel (Strategic policy):

It is recommended that in 'c.', the words 'or the operation of the Canal' should be added after 'without compromising safety'.

Public transport

8.19-8.23 & STC4: Supporting public transport (Strategic policy)

Compatibly with the City Council's working with other authorities and stakeholders to support inclusive, direct, frequent and reliable public transport, we propose a new paragraph after 8.22 to reflect the following points:

Innovative combined bus and ferry tickets from city destinations to hop-on, hop-off points at the Basin and along the canal would be a low-carbon impact service for passengers, daily dog walkers and shoppers, and an active attraction for locals and visitors.

A modal interchange at Marsh Barton rail station would also provide for travel by waterbus and water taxi services to destinations along the waterway, including the canal basin which is more accessible for active access to the city centre than either St Thomas or St David's train stations.

While the above is covered by the reference in STC4 to supporting multi-modal travel, integrated ticketing of this innovative sort would require forward planning and collaboration with operators and so the possibility should be spotlighted in the early stages of developing active transport.

STC4: Supporting public transport (Strategic policy)

To the opening sentence beginning 'The City Council will work ...', we also suggest adding a comma after 'frequent' and inserting 'affordable' before the words 'and reliable public transport'.

Under 'The City Council will support multi-modal travel', insert a new paragraph, 'd': 'Through encouragement of integrated tickets for bus and water ferry services along the canal'.

Travel plans

8.28 People's regular and often daily travel for leisure, shopping, schools and visiting are as likely as to need a travel plan as. This goes beyond what is required of developers for new developments. Existing patterns will need to adapt to climate change and net zero. Equality of assessment of people's needs is required. Policy STC6 for the next 20 years should include consideration that extends further than planning applications for major development proposals.

This affects, inter alia, the Canal and Basin as a destination for active leisure because people must continue to reach the waterway with their boats, paddle boards, kayaks etc.

ST7: Safeguarding transport infrastructure (Strategic policy)

Paragraph 8.30 The Exeter Ship Canal and Basin are part of Exeter's transport infrastructure that supports the delivery of the 2040 Exeter Plan. This is inexplicably omitted from ST7.

Paragraph 'g' gives a false impression that it is merely a question of land for an 'additional active travel crossing' (a bridge) in order to get across the canal. As already made clear in our commentary above, new bridges must not impede navigation and fixed bridges are impossible.

Section 9: Natural environment

9.1 'The city has a high quality natural environment ... water bodies including the River Exe and the Exeter Ship Canal ...' (p.69). This risks morphing into a fundamental error. The canal is not a natural phenomenon or 'green infrastructure' merely because it is accidentally home to natural species. The canal is part of the built environment but this is not to deny that it contributes to aims of biodiversity. It is also worth noting that, because of its function, the canal is accessible along its length while the River Exe is not.

As a blue-green corridor, the canal can connect disparate habitats, enable net gain in biodiversity and, where it does not interfere with functionality, provide habitat creation and improvements. Protected land and aquatic species can be accommodated. In addition to the benefits to 'natural' life, it can be an opportunity for people to see plants, insects and birds, as the Draft acknowledges. To avoid unrealistic expectations, this must be balanced against the benefits and requirements of the canal's functionality and uses. It would be helpful if the Draft indicated this.

As a centuries old but future-orientated, functionable artefact the canal is as irreplaceable for Exeter as some habitats are for wildlife!

Section 10: History and heritage

It is amazing – in fact disturbing – that this section addressing the importance of heritage to the 2040 vision of a liveable and connected city contains no link to, or mention of, Exeter's status as a Heritage Harbour; no mention of the history of its waterway connections pre-dating the Romans; the fundamental role of the Exeter Ship Canal in shaping the city's story or its place in national transport history; or to the Route Map for the future of the canal and the heritage harbour.

As paragraph 10.3 indicates, Exeter has much 'iconic heritage'. The Quay and Canal – the first in Britain since Roman times – should be included in this paragraph to give fully rounded context to the city's character and the importance of waterways and the sea to its identity and history as well as their living contribution to Exeter's economy and liveability. Without such, consideration in the Exeter Plan of history and heritage is lacking a major element.

In 2020 Exeter Canal and Basin were designated as a Heritage Harbour. Exeter was only the fourth in Britain to receive the prestigious recognition in the scheme run by the Maritime Heritage Trust and National Historic Ships. The scheme is not for museum-like maritime exhibits but would protect the long-term regeneration of the canal and basin as a working heritage harbour that celebrates the continuation of its past in the new requirements of the future.

Strategic policy HH1, conserving and enhancing heritage assets

The Heritage Harbour protects historic infrastructure and buildings; preserves the full functionality of the canal; delivers opportunities for low carbon activities based around traditional skills such as boat restoration and new clean hi-tech technologies; contributes significantly to health and wellbeing; connects people and neighbourhoods with the city's maritime history and contemporary culture; and fosters business growth.

Making the most of the working Heritage Harbour offers should be included in the Plan as part of the strategic heritage objectives.

Heritage assets and climate change

10.26 Incorporating historic structures in collective steps towards net zero highlights the possibility of creating hydropower from the river weirs which are heritage assets.

Exeter's historic Canal, Canal Basin and Quay demonstrate the reality of Exeter's ambition to become a city where heritage and innovation can fuse into a sustainable present.

Section 11: Culture and tourism

Tourism as a green industry contributing to net zero and the role of the canal and quaysides seem underplayed in this section.

Exeter, A Waterway City, and water related tourism, could create a whole new income stream. The canal is a West Country green holiday base in waiting. Electric hire boat and canal glamping holidays on parts of the canal meet the growing market for greener holidays. Trail boats would be able to visit the canal if it had a functioning slipway. Improved arrangements at the A379 bridges and provision of moorings with first class facilities would attract visiting vessels including from the sea to cruise the canal and stay at the basin. The boatyard would thrive. Associated businesses would benefit, and income would increase. So would responses to meet a range of net zero emissions targets.

Cultural facilities, 11.10-11.13

With the attractions of the canal and basin and quayside and the prestige of Heritage Harbour status, Exeter could host national and international waterborne and water related conferences, another step towards the world-class. An annual canal festival is already underway and adds to the waterway's part in the city's all-year-round cultural, social and commercial calendar. Details of cultural and tourist events belong to a further stage of the Plan's development but should be signalled strategically in the Draft as including the historic harbour and canal.

The relationship between new facilities for cultural uses on and off the water and brownfield development around Water Lane and the Canal Basin should be indicated.

The Draft should also reference the objective of infrastructure preservation, regeneration and restoration as aspects of the city's culture, including restoring Topsham Lock that links the canal to the river and gives access to Topsham Harbour.

11.7 Exeter's Heritage Harbour complements the aims of the Creative Arc as an agent for culture-led personal development and social change. The harbour's scope for education and training and creative led artistic activities could contribute to the Arc's funding bids for investment.

11.8 and 11.9 The canal and basin's regeneration merits new place-making through interpretation boards and trails, as well as consideration in the Public Art Strategy.

Strategic policy C1, Protecting and enhancing cultural and tourism facilities

We suggest the first sentence needs clarification or re-presenting. What constitutes 'viable' for a cultural use? Money and funding? Quality? Going out of fashion. Hard to organise? Will the lowest common denominator become the decider for cultural activities? In fact – is the sentence really necessary? What is not working will not be likely to last anyway.

The aim of sentence 2 would benefit from clarification also. It reads oddly. If proposals had 'unacceptable impacts on amenity and the quality of the natural, built and historic environment', they would not enhance the profile and identity of Exeter as a city of culture and tourist destination. Is the intention here to protect the 'local' from bigger interests, or to keep out inappropriate or vulgar attractions?

Section 12: High quality places and design

We suggest this section should acknowledge the strategic importance to place-making and design of the transformation of the canal and basin into the focus of working harbourside activity, interest and vitality. It would be wrong if absence of such a strategy led to the canal and basin being subordinated into a leisure destination or backdrop complement to development. The basin is one of Exeter's special, defining spaces, the destination on the edge of the city centre of the city's waterway to and from the sea. This gives it, we believe, a role in the place-making visions of the 2040 Plan.

Design Principles

The waterway and surrounds provide a source of challenge and inspiration for planning and architecture that aspires to more than attractive or merely economically viable buildings and layouts.

The Plan should spell out the planning principle that the purposes of the canal and basin should not be crushed, visually or functionally, by development interests alien to the waterway. The principle should encourage building design near the waterway that is better than pastiche and does not overshadow the water's edge. It will treat humanity equally with viability, and encourage varied and proportionate massing, rooflines, spaces and views. We believe these are strategic principles for the kind of high quality place-making the 2040 Plan strives for.

D1: Design principles (Strategic policy)

We suggest an additional element at 'j' in the strategic list to promote high quality design –

j. Pay due attention in design and layout to the impact of development by the canal and basin on the ability of the waterway to function, and to the visual language and spaces of the character of the area and existing buildings;

Re-letter the elements that follow.

Section 13: Health and wellbeing

It is now well-established since covid that living near an accessible waterway has multiple long-term physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits. Both research and anecdotal evidence support this. It is strategically important that the particular boosts of visits to the waterway should be recognised among the other health-promoting strategies of the 2040 Plan.

Being active on the water or along the waterside, walking, running, cycling, angling, canoeing, paddleboarding and active volunteering – with family, a dog or on one's own – these are key and should be protected and supported.

Flat towpaths make them ideal for people with mobility problems. The heritage harbour legacy and long-term active regeneration of the Canal and Basin are beneficial in terms of health and wellbeing to the lives and engagement Exeter citizens at large. Their benefit will be significantly compromised if the canal loses its capacity to bring new and varied life to its operations and activities and becomes, increasingly, an inert strip of water, a linear lake.

Water based activities are now available on prescription in many places to address social, emotional and health needs. There are potential savings to the NHS and social care budgets, plus the value to personal levels of activity and fitness. It also brings opportunities for innovation and research into benefits of active access to water, perhaps at a dedicated clinic.

Health and wellbeing, 3.4-3.12 & Strategic policy HW1

All the above have a key role, dependent on the canal, in the health and wellbeing of residents. It is therefore suggested an additional paragraph should be added to 'Health and wellbeing' to stipulate that development should do nothing to compromise these benefits.

Strategically, a developer unable to promote health and wellbeing could be able to make contributions to the upkeep of the canal towpaths and visitor facilities and infrastructure.

It would be open to a developer also to contribute by encouraging volunteering on the waterway among its workforce in conjunction with a group such as the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal.

Section 14: Infrastructure and facilities

The objective of planning for new infrastructure and facilities at the right time and in the right places flags up the use that can be made of the canal in support.

Section 14 deals with a range of community facilities that might be included in developments. It does not reference other infrastructure needs in the city not associated with developments that will present themselves for attention during the course of the Plan's life. Some of them are important strategically to forward planning: relating to the waterways, these elements include:

Bridges

Replacement of the A379 moveable bridges over the canal.

Improving the canal's Salmonpool Swing Bridge and the river's Trews Weir suspension bridge because neither is wide enough for an increase in pedestrian and cycle traffic.

Widening the narrow bridge over the flood relief channel at Trews Weir to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely in flood conditions.

Replacing the missing Mallison Bridge across the Higher Leat at Exeter Quay, because pedestrians and cyclists have to navigate a narrow alley to and from the canal basin.

Weirs

Ensuring the integrity of Trews Weir. If it fails, the canal is likely to lose its water.

Slipways

Currently there are no functioning slipways on the canal except for the smallest of craft. A review of slipway requirements is necessary for the development of most waterborne activities to proceed.

Access and parking

To support the use of the canal and its paths easy access for all to the water and waterside is essential, including accommodating vehicles transporting craft, whether canoes on car roofs, or boats on trailers or large cranes for boat lifting.

Moorings

As well as first class, carbon zero facilities for pump out, portable toilet emptying, rubbish disposal, electric charging points, fresh water, toilets and showers, it is essential that moorings should meet up-to-date specifications for disability access with sufficient space at the canal edge for organising wheelchairs, mobility scooters and guide dogs.

Clean water

Any danger of sewage or effluent overflow into the water from the Countess Wear sewage works or elsewhere is unacceptable. Designated authorities must ensure the sewage system is adequate and secure for the number of new dwellings and other developments that are planned for the city.

IC3: Community facilities (Strategic policy)

Community facilities that connect people with the water, especially at or in the vicinity of the canal basin, should have a reference in this policy as they do not fit totally into the current wording. We suggest a new line in the paragraph beginning 'Facilities that service the city as a whole':

Facilities that use or are reliant on the waterways or canal basin should be retained in these areas.

importance and contribution of the canal and basin has been made.

We would wish to have the opportunity to offer comments on revisions to the Draft and we are always keen to discuss any aspect.

The Canal and Basin can be a flagship innovation hub in their own right if strategically managed with that end in view.

February 2024