

## HMO Supplementary Planning Document Review Consultation

The current consultation launched on 22 May and running until 3 July is an important one for everyone in St James concerned about community balance to engage with and respond to. However, there is much to digest, so while urging all to respond, we would suggest that you hold back for now, but put a reminder in your diaries to do this nearer the 3 July.

We shall be scrutinising the document with care and discussing the details and implications with others, including our councillors, with the intention of reporting back with some key points for your consideration when you respond.

Preliminary reading of the 64 page '*2022 Review of Houses in Multiple Occupation: Data Update and Options Report*' has already raised a number of serious concerns. For example, this includes the point made that should the Council's preferred option 2 be chosen, '*decisions may need to be taken about extending the boundaries of current "exempted areas"*', for which the term '*Student Quarters*' has been introduced.

It states that '*(s)ome postcodes within the Article 4 area, often immediately adjacent to the exempted areas, are also in excess of 70% student housing*'.

This will be no surprise to those who have despaired of the Council's approach to enforcement, but if, as is implied, the proposal is to expand the existing exempt streets, to include these neighbouring streets, establishing ever wider '*Student Quarters*', it is absolutely unacceptable if affected residents have not been approached before now.

The Consultants claim to have held discussions with stakeholders including resident representatives of affected areas prior to drafting the review, but we have yet to find any resident or resident group in St James, invited to take part. Do please let us know if you, or anyone you know, has been involved. It seems likely that the only invited residents live outside the existing A4D area, for example, Pennsylvania and Duryard.

A document prepared by a group to simplify and advise residents in Pennsylvania, states that '*The (A4D) restriction has been effective but the Council has recognised that it needs extending to a wider area because new HMOs are being developed outside the original controlled area.*'

If, as it appears, this is the message that has been fed by the Council or Consultants, neighbouring communities are being encouraged to place false hope in adoption of A4D for their area.

We are concerned, too, over the unreliability of the data used, which is likely to render the whole exercise ineffective. We await the verdict of Exeter Observer, when comparisons have been made between the data provided for the purpose by the University, with that finally drawn out of the University by a series of Freedom of Information requests.

So – do scrutinise the documentation yourselves [here](#) (or search 'Exeter City Council HMO SPD consultation', but don't rely simply on the glossy brochure – check out the 64 page Review document - or wait for further unpacking and advice that we plan to offer in due course.