



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Nick Boles MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning)

The Right Hon Don Foster MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Department for Communities and Local Government

Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Jo Hawkins
Exeter St James Neighbourhood
Forum
St Sidwell's Community Centre
Sidwell Street
Exeter
EX4 6NN

Tel: 0303 444 3459
Fax: 020 7821 0635
E-Mail: nick.boles@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0303 444 3440
Fax: 0303 444 3287
E-Mail: don.foster@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.communities.gov.uk

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Following your successful examination in February, we wanted to write to congratulate you on being the first neighbourhood forum in the country to proceed to referendum. Your neighbourhood plan is also the first for a city setting to have reached this stage. This is an achievement to be proud of.

Neighbourhood planning is one of the most important changes we are making to the planning system. We feel strongly that communities should be able to have input into the plans for development in their neighbourhood. Not just consultation that is acknowledged and then ignored, but real involvement and a vote on the outcome.

That's why we created the option of a neighbourhood plan, drawn up by representatives of a defined community and subject to a referendum of all their neighbours, before it can become part of the statutory plan that is used to decide planning applications in the area.

We are glad that you have been able to translate legislation created in Westminster into policy crafted in St James, working closely and constructively with Exeter City Council. This starts to show how communities can use the new system to put forward changes that reflect their own specific needs; a fundamental change to the planning system.

You and your team have done a tremendous job. Your work is a powerful testament to the community spirit in St James and an example to the hundreds of communities that are now following your lead. We are both greatly looking forward to our upcoming visit to Exeter and hearing for ourselves about St James and your vision for the neighbourhood.

NICK BOLES MP

RT HON DON FOSTER MP