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IN EXETER

# Sidwell Street Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan July 2024.

## Introduction

Sidwell Street is the multicultural hub of Exeter with some of the best places to get a taste of international food in the city. Home to a rich mix of specialist shops for hobbies, gaming and tech as well as charity shops for pre-loved treasures. Stretching from John Lewis to the ODEON Cinema and with the new bus station, student accommodation and city leisure centre just off the main street, this is a vibrant and busy area.

However, antisocial behaviour is a significant challenge on Sidwell Street. There are daily challenges with street drinking, violence and aggressive behaviour which is negatively impacting on people's experiences of visiting the city. Shoplifting, partly fueled by drug addiction, is now commonplace, and businesses are suffering unsustainable losses.

This plan has been produced following two meetings (Fri 10 May and Tues 11 June 2024) between local businesses, the police, InExeter - the business improvement district (BID), the council and charities including St Sidwell's Community Centre, CoLab and the YMCA. The aim is to develop a shared understanding of the issues, improve communication between those impacted and to have a coordinated response so that everyone feels safe whether they live, work, study or are visiting Sidwell Street.

## Survey data

Stakeholders were invited to complete a short survey to establish a baseline on perceptions of safety on Sidwell Street. This was sent via email to businesses in May and 31 responses were received.

55% of respondents felt Sidwell Street was either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' during the day with only 2 people (6%) saying they felt it was generally 'safe.' In terms of the evening and nighttime, 83% of respondents felt Sidwell Street was either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' with only one respondent reporting that the area felt safe in the evening.

When asked to describe the main daytime challenges on Sidwell Street, respondents reported street drinking, drug use and dealing, the actions of some who are rough sleeping, rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour, violent and aggressive behaviour as major challenges. Shoplifting, defecation and urination also featured highly. In the comments, littering and harassment and intimidation of staff were also listed.

It was a similar picture in the evening although with less emphasis on shoplifting. In the comments, 4 respondents noted that they either avoided or weren't open on Sidwell Street in the evening so found it harder to comment.

# **SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN**

## **JULY 2024.**

When asked which areas were impacted by anti-social behaviour, it was clear that this is a prevalent issue experienced almost everywhere on Sidwell Street. Areas that featured particularly highly included the community garden, the alleyway alongside Savers and outside the shops under the covered walkway at the start of Sidwell Street. The car parks and the rear of the business premises were also noted in the comments.

97% of respondents reported feeling concerned for the safety of their colleagues or customers in the last 12 months with 90% either 'very' or 'quite worried'. 97% of respondents haven't seen any improvements in terms of levels of ASB on Sidwell Street in the last 12 months with 84% reporting it is either 'worse' or 'much worse'.

Businesses are already taking action to address crime and antisocial behaviour on Sidwell Street with 74% saying that they have reported crime in the last 12 months and 65% providing training or awareness raising with staff. 55% of respondents use Exeter Business Against Crime (EBAC)'s two-way radio communication service to connect which connects to the CCTV control room. Other actions taken include CCTV upgrades, giving staff personal alarms and hiring private security.

Suggestions for improving community safety on Sidwell Street included increased police presence (100%) or community safety officer patrols (83%). 61% felt that stakeholder meetings between police and business would continue to be advantageous. Other suggestions included improved street design and layout e.g. through removing some of the bus stops and increasing the number of tables and chairs outside cafes.

**The above data was collected in June 2024.**

## **Our threshold of acceptable behaviour**

We want Sidwell Street to be an inclusive and welcoming place for all where people feel safe to socialise, relax and enjoy this vibrant part of the city.

A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act was introduced by Exeter City Council on 20 June 2022 and is currently in place until June 2025. The PSPO prohibits:

- The consumption, possession or intended use of intoxicating substances.
- Aggressive begging
- Urinating or defecating
- Behaving in a manner which has caused or is likely to cause a member of the public to suffer harassment alarm, distress.

People who breach these prohibitions, shall when ordered to do so by an authorised person, leave the area either immediately or by such time as may be specified. An authorised person shall be a Police Constable, Police Community Support Officer or Exeter City Council Enforcement Officer who must be able to present their authority upon request.

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN JULY 2024.

## Exeter Business Against Crime (EBAC)

EBAC is a proactive partnership dedicated to combating business crime and anti-social behaviour. It provides a communication network to increase awareness of offenders and criminal activity in the city. This is achieved using a two-way digital radio network and the Exeter's CCTV system.

The EBAC DISC system is a secure intranet which allows us to share up to date images and incident reports of those who commit shoplifting or anti-social behaviour offences. DISC allows us to gather and share intelligence between members and with the Police as determined by data exchange protocols.

The following Sidwell Street businesses are currently members of EBAC:

- British Heart Foundation
- Bus Station
- Children's Hospice South West
- Duke of York
- Exeter Craft Hub
- Iceland
- Imperial Games
- John Lewis
- Monkey Suit
- RSPCA
- Sainsbury's
- Sharps
- Subway
- Tesco

InExeter subsidise EBAC membership for independent businesses and charities.

Find further details here:

[Exeter Business Against Crime \(EBAC\) Partnership – Exeter City Council](#)

## CCTV coverage – Exeter City Council

Following investment in 2023, there are now 15 cameras covering Sidwell Street. Outside of Next, The Monkey Suit and the Duke of York pub there are high-definition pan, tilt, zoom (PTZ) cameras with four new statics cameras also included at each location. In addition, there is a fixed camera outside the ODEON and a camera owned by Devon County Council (DCC) at St Anne's roundabout.

Adjacent to Sidwell Street there are cameras at Red Lion Lane (5 cameras), Verney Street (5 cameras), Summerland Street (5 cameras), York Road (5 cameras), Longbrook Street (5 cameras), Queens Crescent (5 cameras), Old Tiverton Road (10 cameras) and Blackboy road (7 cameras one of which is DCC owned).

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN JULY 2024.

The map below shows the extent of coverage on Sidwell Street. A total of 31 cameras cover the shaded area shown below:



## Observations on design and use:

- Whilst the design of some spaces on Sidwell Street could be improved, this is not the main driver for crime and ASB.
- The public space outside the St Sidwell centre although a hotspot for ASB, is not particularly poorly designed. Overall and during daylight hours it has good surveillance, is well overlooked, clearly defined, has some legitimate activity. Restricting access is not practical and the parties involved are keen to keep the space open and inviting.
- Occupying the space with more legitimate use may help increase positive behaviours e.g., working with groups, fetes, theatres, community activities etc as well as having and having robust and clear management to deter misuse. However, there will be resource constraints impacting how regularly the space can be used and this would simply displace the individuals elsewhere.

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN

## JULY 2024.

- Whilst some design changes may help, eradicating the issues completely will prove difficult and a multi-agency approach is required to ensure undesirable behaviour is addressed. Engaging with the offenders and working with the victims will be more effective than making alterations to the design of the locations in this instance.

## Action Plan

As a community, we pledge to all:

- Report criminal activity using 999 when an immediate response is needed,<sup>101</sup> in non-emergency situations or online [Report a crime | Devon & Cornwall Police \(devon-cornwall.police.uk\)](https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/report-a-crime)
- Challenge drinking of alcohol and antisocial behaviour if safe and appropriate to do so.
- Share this ASB Action Plan with colleagues encouraging staff to challenge ASB if safe and appropriate to do so.
- Signup for Bystander Intervention training [Bystander Intervention Campaign - Exeter City Council](https://www.exetercitycouncil.gov.uk/bystander-intervention-training)
- Share information and communicate with other members of Sidwell Street's business community to address ASB.

## Key stakeholders pledge to:

	People	Place	Partnership
<b>Police</b>	<p>Increase presence and robustness in enforcing PSPO and no alcohol zone.</p> <p>Increased visibility through hotspot policing and introducing mobile police station (i.e. riot van) from which officers can complete paperwork and still be visible.</p> <p>Seek geographic restrictions to include Sidwell Street when Criminal Behaviour Orders are issued by court against an individual.</p>	<p>Target key areas of concern as opposed to general patrols.</p> <p>Deploy Design Out Crime Officer to suggest any physical interventions that could mitigate impacts of ASB.</p>	<p>Support Co-Lab when requested to challenge ASB and criminal activity.</p> <p>Provide reports and updates to stakeholders.</p> <p>Invite relevant representatives from ECC, DCC and Public Health to be part of discussions.</p>

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN

## JULY 2024.

	<b>People</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Partnership</b>
<b>Exeter City Council</b>	With InExeter, deploy Community Safety Team with enforcement powers.	Maintain coverage of CCTV and notify stakeholders of any issues.  Propose additional measures and solutions.  Liaise with Diocese and St Sidwell's community Centre re maintenance and improvements to garden e.g. sink hole repair and works to the yew tree to improve visibility into the space.	Manage EBAC system and ensure users receive radios and training.  EBAC to provide data on incidents reported via EBAC.  Offer to visit the CCTV control room. Please <a href="mailto:Dennis.Cavanagh@exeter.gov.uk">Dennis.Cavanagh@exeter.gov.uk</a> if interested.
<b>InExeter BID</b>	With Exeter City Council deploy Community Safety Team with enforcement powers.  7-day week responsive street cleansing for BID members. <a href="#">Request a service - InExeter</a>	Work with all businesses that are interested and specifically food and beverage businesses to reclaim the outdoor space/pavement areas.  Formulate clear asks and lead discussions with relevant authorities i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DCC and ECC re investment in resources needed to find long-term solutions.</li> <li>▪ Crown Estate regarding disrepair and run down aesthetic.</li> <li>▪ DCC and Stagecoach to develop a solution for bus stops.</li> <li>▪ Community Safety Partnership and ASB Working Group</li> </ul>	Develop a joint impact statement to Police on the impact of ASB on Sidwell Street.  Monthly e-newsletter to include policing updates. Subscribe here: <a href="#">InExeter Ltd (list-manage.com)</a>  Administer area WhatsApp groups as a communications channel for businesses. Text 07396 721 325 to be added to Sidwell Street WhatsApp group.

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN

## JULY 2024.

	<b>People</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Partnership</b>
<b>Co-lab</b>	<p>Influence clients to behave in appropriate manner and make them aware of standards of behaviour.</p> <p>Encourage peer-on-peer policing of behaviour by clients.</p> <p>Engage (if safe/appropriate) with any individuals behaving in antisocial manner.</p> <p>Action Research project looking at understanding perspectives of people seen as perpetrators of ASB.</p>		<p>Provide advice and work with businesses on how to engage non-confrontationally with and street attached, as requested.</p> <p>Share contact details of the Welcome Manager for any concerns relating to mental health.</p> <p>Look into hosting an open day event to show the wider community the work being done and to invite further collaboration.</p>
<b>YMCA</b>	<p>Encourage residents to report issues of anti-social behaviour that they witness to the Police.</p>		<p>Provide footage when required by Police or other partners from own CCTV network which includes audio and covers the community garden and Acland Road.</p> <p>Share contact details of volunteer who has offered to provide capture footage with partners.</p> <p>Lead on setting out clear asks of DCC regarding access to drug rehabilitation and wait times to be supported by partners.</p> <p>Invitation for Police to attend monthly games/craft evening at Sidwell Centre. Monthly on the first Tuesday 5-8pm.</p>

# SIDWELL STREET ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) ACTION PLAN

## JULY 2024.

	People	Place	Partnership
<b>Sidwell Street traders</b>	Support each other through communication and occasional meetings to look at current issues and ideas around working together to develop Sidwell Street.	Focus groups set up and meet on subjects such as – anti social behaviour – how to respond/ help each other safely. First aid response in road, cleansing and EBAC.	



## Action Plan

- Date: July 2024
- Review Date: October 2024