

PRESS RELEASE

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Local Plan will create a dangerously divided community

Alphington Village Forum was represented by its Chairman, Juliet Meadowcroft, at the Teignbridge District Council's public hearing session in their Council Chamber at Newton Abbot on 17 September, when the Government Inspector, Geoff Salter, examined various issues concerning the South-West Exeter part of the Teignbridge Local Plan (SWE1) for 2013-33.

The main aim was to establish whether or not the Teignbridge Plan for at least 2,000 new dwellings between Alphington and Exminster are 'sound', which is defined by the words 'positively prepared', 'justified', 'effective', and 'consistent with national policy'. Referring to its inconsistency with government planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework), Mrs Meadowcroft stressed the main points of the Forum's objection were the undesirability of building a new settlement with a major noisy barrier, the existing A379, running through it and splitting it, and also that this urban sprawl would destroy the valued landscape setting of the south-west gateway to Exeter. The NPPF states that Local Plans 'do not merge settlements'.

She pointed out that the draft Masterplan on which Teignbridge Council's Local Plan proposal for this South West Exeter development proposal was based, stated that "the land that defines the southern boundary of Alphington is modern arable farmland which rises up to the Markham Lane ridge, enhancing the setting of Alphington and of the City". Mrs Meadowcroft said that the land between the Markham Lane ridge and the A379 should be defined as a green break, to prevent an urban sprawl joining Exeter to Exminster.

The draft Masterplan also stated that the current A379 "will form a barrier to a well connected and therefore sustainable urban extension" and it therefore proposed to "change the nature of the road to reduce its dominance and allow it to become a primary street rather than a peripheral distributor road." This proposal is repeated in the recent TDC Local Plan, so no notice was taken of the Forum's original response last year.

Mrs Meadowcroft pointed out that it would, in reality, be difficult to downgrade this road as it is an essential and very busy link road round the outskirts of Exeter. She quoted from the Minutes of a workshop that the Forum had held with Exeter City Council on the subject of the Alphington part of the SWE1 development, when the DCC Transport Studies Manager, Jamie Hulland, had said: "DCC plans to make the ring road from Hill Barton Rd to the A379 passing Marsh Barton to the A38 all to a **two-lane dual carriageway standard.....** Funding has been secured to help deliver this and work is due to commence towards the end of 2013/14".

Jamie has since confirmed that "The Local Plan includes a change to the character of the A379, but DCC has always maintained that this road has an important strategic function in serving Marsh Barton, Pynes Hill and other business areas of the City and so cannot be narrowed. Widening work will now start in 2015." The DCC representative present at the hearing denied that the Teignbridge Plan included downgrading the A379.

The Government-endorsed publication entitled 'Building for Life 12', produced to help local planning authorities assess the quality of proposed and completed developments and as a point of reference in the preparation of local design policies, states that layout should be designed "to improve connectivity across the wider neighbourhood". This plan will do the opposite as it will create a divided community.

ENDS

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