

4 August 2015

Councillor Jeremy Christophers
Leader, Teignbridge District Council

Dear Councillor Christophers

PLAN TEIGNBRIDGE - SOUTH WEST EXETER: SWE1

I am writing to you as a last desperate resort, as the Alphington Village Forum has been submitting comments and objections to Teignbridge District Council planners for several years now with regard to your Local Plan, and to the Development Framework for South West Exeter (SWE1). Unfortunately the Government Inspector ignored our constructive suggestions about creating this development of at least 2,000 new homes in Exminster Parish as a separate village, rather than a community with a major road dividing it in two without the necessary infrastructure on each side. In our response to Plan Teignbridge in December 2012, we summarised our comments as follows:

‘We recognise that some development could be accommodated in south west Exeter but not in the form and quantity presently envisaged. We believe that the best approach to planning this area is to define the sloping hillside fields between the Alphington ridge line and the A379 as a strategic break/green wedge, with no development. This would preserve the landscape setting of the City and would provide a clear break between Alphington and the new community to be created on the south side of the A379. It would also allow the role of the A379 as a major traffic distributor around the periphery of Exeter to be maintained. This is a rural fringe location on the edge of an attractive city and the opportunity should be taken to provide a ‘new village’ type of development rather than the presently proposed urban sprawl of unrelated housing groups.’

The Inspector even admitted that we had a point about the road splitting the new community, but then approved the Local Plan as it stood - a badly planned urban sprawl latched on to Alphington Village.

Since then the planners have changed the Local Plan for the worse, as they removed the proposed primary school near our village as well as a small community building, and thus the opportunity of providing some kind of community hub for the 3,000 minimum new residents on the north side of the development. The Forum supports all the comments made in two letters sent to you dated 23 May 2014 and 8 June 2015, from the Exeter City Council Leader, Cllr Pete Edwards. Among his many points, he objects to this lack of a primary school near Alphington and the fact that all the new community facilities will be south of the A379 and thus not easily accessible to everyone. This unwise change will result in our already over-flowing village currently with over 4,000 residents becoming even more congested, with thousands more trying to use our facilities. In particular the roads will be even more dangerous than they are now and we already have air pollution in Church Road, where traffic often piles up.

The reason I have decided to contact you now is that, as Chairman of the Alphington Village Forum, I represented our local residents as one of the two formal objectors at last week’s Planning Committee meeting at your offices, when the Bovis Homes planning application for South West Exeter was discussed. The other objector was Exminster Parish Council represented by Adrian Wood and the only supporter was Andrew Penna representing Bovis Homes.

I again raised the main points concerning Alphington residents, which are the inevitable increase of traffic through the already congested village, a Conservation Area, and the lack of infrastructure and community facilities for the 3,000+ new residents on the north side of the A379. I also pointed out that this part of the development north of the A379 is to include half of the 1,350 new homes proposed by Bovis, so together with Westcountry Land’s 230 homes at the bottom of Chudleigh Road and approximately 350-400 homes proposed by Exeter City Council in Alphington village, this will make up **over half of the whole development of South West Exeter’s 2,500 new dwellings – that is at least 1,300 new homes without any new community buildings or focal centre!**

However, I have the strong impression that it does not make any difference what Alphington residents think as it seems your planners are determined to go ahead regardless of all the objections we and others have submitted at every stage of this Local Plan over the last few years. When Teignbridge held an exhibition in our village hall in January 2012, 76% of the survey respondents said they would not support this massive development!

My impression of the Teignbridge planners' bias against us was made even stronger when I noticed the comment about Alphington Village Forum and its residents included in the Agenda, as follows:

'The vast majority of these representations have come from Alphington residents, and Alphington Forum members, objecting to the principle of development'.

This is absolutely outrageous, as we have said again and again that we do not object to the principle of development as we appreciate that more houses are needed nationally. The vast majority of our objections have repeated the main points that were in our response to Plan Teignbridge in 2012, namely the facts that the development will end up as a split community with few opportunities for real cohesion, that the traffic from 2,500 more homes will have a seriously devastating effect on Alphington, and Exeter in general, that the sprawl will have an adverse impact on the lovely landscape setting of Exeter, and finally that it will be a disaster if the infrastructure provision is inadequate and out of step with development. Unfortunately none of these warnings have been heeded by Teignbridge.

The Agenda even omitted the Forum's response to the Bovis plans, yet included the comments from both Ide and Shillingford, neither of which villages will be directly affected by these! It listed 18 matters of concern expressed by residents, but I wonder if these are being seriously considered by anyone? I also wonder if the councillors who came on a site visit recently even thought of looking at our village, which is already badly congested with traffic in the rush hours? Our roads are narrow, the primary school and surgery are both over-full, and there is one small shop with hardly anywhere to park, yet the Bovis plans offer NO community facilities whatsoever for the 3,000 or more new residents on this side of the A379! Do you really think that everyone is going to walk a mile or so and over a high bridge spanning the four lanes of the A379 in order to get to a surgery, shops, school and sports centre? I fear this is an idealistic illusion, which will result in even more cars trying to get across this major road, especially parents with small school children and baby buggies, who will not be prepared to walk all that way in windy, freezing or wet weather. There will be at least 325 primary school children in this situation, so possibly over 300 more cars blocking up our busy roads! I appeal to you to revert to having two primary schools, one on each side of this dangerous road.

It is a pity that Bovis planners did not properly consult the ECC Development Brief for Alphington, drawn up after five workshops with the Forum, Exeter City and Devon County officers and councillors. This clearly states that this ridgeline should be protected from high buildings next to it, and Markham Lane should be kept as a safe, quiet pedestrian and cycle lane, yet Bovis has proposed not only 2.5-storey houses right on the ridgeline, but also a bus crossing over half-way down Markham Lane between the two developments! There are few cycle tracks shown.

The Forum has produced a petition to your Council stating yet again how concerned the residents are about the traffic issues, the lack of infrastructure and close community facilities, etc, but also making a positive suggestion that would act as some mitigation for the village. This is that the field where the primary school was to be built, next to the historic Markham Lane (which is the boundary between us and TDC), should be kept as a SANGs area (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace). This already has crops growing on it (as do all the other fields on this side of the A379) and could be an ideal situation for a country park, and it would also help preserve the precious trees and hedgerows, and especially the ridgeline seen for miles around. This petition has been signed by 100s of residents.

I am attaching the Forum's two responses to the Bovis consultation, omitted from the Agenda, and would ask you to look at our website for further information and comments: www.alphingtonforum.co.uk. We plead with you to look into this quagmire urgently before it is too late and rescue the future residents from living in an isolated community.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Meadowcroft
AVF Chairman

Cc: Cllr Dennis Smith, Chairman of TDC Planning Committee
Roselyn Eastman, TDC Principal Planning Officer (Major Projects)
Cllr Peter Edwards, ECC Leader; Cllr Rachel Sutton, Deputy ECC Leader
Cllr Philip Bialyk, Chairman of ECC Planning Committee
Richard Short, ECC Assistant Director, City Development
Cllr John Hart, DCC Leader; Dave Black, DCC Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment;

Sarah Ratnage, DCC Infrastructure Development Management Officer