

5 September 2016

Joe Keech, Chief
Devon County
County Hall,
EXETER EX2 4QD

Take action today to shape Alphington's tomorrow

Planner
Council
Topsham Road

Dear Mr Keech

RE: Alphington Village Forum's reply to Devon County Council's response to NPS's outline planning applications for the Aldens Farm development - Ref: 15/0640/01 & 15/0641/01

You will no doubt have seen the Forum's response to these outline plans, which is listed on the South West Alphington Development Brief/Supplementary Planning Document's website. This expresses our surprise that the outline plans contained far too little useful information and in our opinion were not fit for purpose and should not be accepted by ECC as adequate for proper scrutiny to be carried out. One of our members, Peter Phillips, also wrote a detailed list of 14 objections on 22 July, which is shown on the ECC website. Other residents found it hard to comment on the plans as they were so vague and contained so little detail.

Our Development Brief/Supplementary Planning Document (ADB) is only mentioned briefly and despite being drawn up at five workshops between the Forum and the relevant officers from ECC and DCC over a considerable period of time, it appears that little notice has been taken of its contents either by NPS or in your response to their outline plans. This apparent waste of effort and money makes local consultation a complete farce. We will continue to express our views about these plans and here respond to your report:

1. Co-operation between all three local authorities

The Forum completely agrees and welcomes the county council's intention to continue to work with the city council, district council and developers to proactively pursue a policy of collaboration and a comprehensive approach to the delivery of strategic allocation. We strongly support this 'joined-up approach', as it is necessary to ensure that individual development proposals will not preclude the future delivery of critical infrastructure, in addition to ensuring that a high quality, sustainable community is created.

We were glad to note that in your response to the ADB's Adoption Statement, you stated that: *'The brief would be improved by recognising that the site relates to a much wider development area which continues into Teignbridge. This is not reflected with enough significance, especially in relation to the proposed location of community facilities. The site should be considered as part of a 2500 dwelling urban extension rather than a single 500 dwelling development, therefore, facilities such as the doctor's surgery, recycling facilities and allotments should be located as appropriate to the wider context.'* In response to this comment, ECC added another paragraph to this effect in the ADB Introduction, but this unfortunately seems to have been ignored.

The Forum has not seen much evidence of this wider context approach, especially on the side of the Teignbridge District Council, as they have insisted on placing all the new community buildings, including the new schools, on the south side of the A379, which makes access very difficult despite the proposed building of a pedestrian/cyclist bridge. This decision has now been set in stone in the TDC Development Framework, despite ECC telling TDC in two different letters that they are not willing to contribute any funds towards the primary school as they and the Forum have objected all along to the only school for 630 primary school children being sited so far from Alphington and the rest of the northern part of the TDC development. The ECC and the Forum have consistently asked for two primary schools at TDC consultations, but to no avail.

The Forum requests a full and complete review of the whole SWE development, rather than being presented with constituent parts presented in a piece-meal fashion. This request is because currently the infrastructure is grossly inadequate and therefore the likelihood of a cohesive, sustainable community is doubtful. We therefore request a fully comprehensive compilation of the most up-to-date information available with detailed drawings across all the planned development areas in order to track and clarify where there are gaps in thinking and weaknesses in infrastructure.

2. The number of houses

The development area on these applications totals less than 10 hectares, thus the number of dwellings should be reduced accordingly. The average dwellings per hectare for Alphington is at present 35 dph and this is the proposed limit set by both Bovis and Westcountry Land, the other two developers on the north side of the South West Exeter development. The Alphington Development Brief states: *'Recent developments on the edge of Exeter have achieved an average net density of around 35 dph. In order to respect the character and appearance of neighbouring residential areas, the topography of the site and its proximity to a Scheduled Ancient Monument, those areas along the northern boundaries and southern boundaries of the site must be developed at around 20 dph.'*(P 5)

The Forum expects NPS to reduce the number of houses from 350 to reflect the reduced area shown.

3. Local transport

The Forum is not confident with the trip rates taken from the Access Strategy and disagrees with the assumption that there will be a high uptake of sustainable transport modes. Most households today own two cars and will not rely on cycling or walking everywhere, especially if they are disabled in any way or have a young family. We have an ageing population and there are very few old people who will take up cycling just to please local councils.

The new bus routes must not be at the expense of existing bus users in Alphington and have already been discussed at great length in the workshops held with ECC (see the AD Brief, p 7-8). Public transport is too expensive for many people, so many parents will be tempted to use their car to get children to school etc, especially if they are on their way to work. People needing to see a doctor will undoubtedly go by car, having to cross over the A379 or drive round the dangerous Devon Hotel roundabout - where we assume there will be improvements as the access points are lethal at present.

The above are examples that prove the failure of the planned travel infrastructure and travel plan to reflect the priorities of DCC's agreed Transport Hierarchy - to provide sufficient, integrated and sustainable means to travel around and beyond the development, in particular to connect with the neighbouring development.

The bus route across Markham Lane, proposed by Bovis, and apparently approved by DCC, is in total contravention of the green lane strategy of ECC. The Alphington Development Brief states that ***'The developer will be required to fund the provision of a high-quality pedestrian and cycle route along the site's southern boundary, including Markham Lane, via a Section 106 Agreement.'*** The Forum disagrees strongly with DCC's approval of the Bovis plan to cut across this historic country lane as it will destroy the only peaceful off-road walk in Alphington, in addition to making the cycle track unsafe. If the road crossing Aldens West were taken diagonally from Chudleigh Road to the top of the development at Shillingford Road, the buses could cross into and out of the Bovis land at the top of the lane where it meets Shillingford Road, instead of in the centre. This would then fulfil the promise made to the Forum by ECC in 2014 (ADB, p 8).

There is no such access/egress point shown on Figure 1 in Aldens Farm Appendix A - Accessibility. We thus request that DCC contact TDC and demand that Bovis changes its plan accordingly and also that NPS refuse to include a bus route across the centre of Markham Lane. We suggest too that DCC/NPS change the direction of the principal road through Aldens West as described above, to join the bus route at the top.

Junctions with Chudleigh Road & Dawlish Road (between Alden East and West developments)

There are only three junctions that are actually relevant as the one on the west side of Chudleigh Road is outside of the application area under scrutiny because it is not on land that is part of this planning application. The others are all marked 'indicative' and the DCC report criticises them for not being designed to 'best policy', yet does not appear to object to them sufficiently to have them changed, despite the fact that they 'do not consider the full impact of the wider development' and that 'it is disappointing that the opportunity has been missed to try to incorporate' the approach recommended in the Manual for Streets. This is very soft language for something so important and the report admits that this would have assisted to reinforce the 20mph speed limit on Chudleigh Road. Incidentally, there is no mention of such a speed limit on the Dawlish Road despite the new junction from Aldens Farm East opening on to it. At present cars travel 60 mph along this narrow road and residents already find it very dangerous trying to get out of their drives.

The Forum is not satisfied with the structure of these junctions as the traffic on both roads travels at high speed, despite the 20mph limit on Chudleigh Road, and there will undoubtedly be more cars than anticipated according to the official trip rates. The number of houses north of the A379 is expected to be approx 1,300 and many will have at least one car and far more will have two, which they are bound to use to reach work, shops and schools, especially in winter.

The Forum believes that the expected traffic capacity is unrealistic and insists that the Highway Authority improves these junctions, bearing in mind the whole development of 2,500 new homes, not just the ECC ones. We suggest that in particular the proposed junctions in Chudleigh Road just beyond the ECC boundary should be seriously taken into account by NPS/DCC, as these also open on to this busy road just below the brow of the hill where the banks are high and where southward-bound cars pick up speed.

Junction of Chudleigh Road with A379

The reason for the realignment of this junction was not only for safety purposes, but to stop traffic using Chudleigh Road as a short cut into Exeter, as at present. Alphington is a Conservation Area and Church Road in particular is already congested and polluted by an excess of constant and queuing traffic. If TDC will not provide the funds for the re-alignment of this junction, then the Bovis homes should not even be built, let alone 'occupied' (the word used in the DCC response), and this should be put into the Grampian condition.

We request that planning applications should not be approved until the funding of this work is agreed by all parties.

Pavements, traffic calming in Chudleigh Road and access to new community centre

It is also essential that the pedestrian/cyclist bridge is built before occupation of the houses, so that the new residents will get used to going that way to the local centre with the school, shops, surgery, sports centre etc. If they start having to come into Alphington village for these, they will not wish to change their habits. The village facilities are already over-subscribed and there are few places to park a car.

The Forum has emphasised throughout the planning process that the pavements in Chudleigh Road need to be improved, as at present they switch from one side of the road to the other and are extremely narrow in places, particularly in the Alphington section of the road. For instance, it would make good sense to use the narrow points between Markham Lane and the double roundabout at the Chantry Meadow/Shillingford Road junctions to create one-way traffic 'build-outs' to widen the pavement and to calm the speed of the vehicles, especially if coming from the south, before they arrive at the roundabout. This particular work was not included in the proposed traffic management plans drawn up by DCC with the Forum.

The Forum requests that DCC ensures that these improvements are included in the NPS outline plans, which should also show protected cycle routes along roads and off-road, as well as all the bus routes.

4. Internal layout of roads and streets

The Manual for Streets is recommended but this is not the best practice for a village area like Alphington, where the *cul de sacs* keep speeds down and protects children. The Alphington Development Brief stated: *'The development must be designed to ensure vehicular speeds of no more than 20mph. A Home Zone layout will be supported.'* (ADB, p 8). This is specially designed to minimise vehicle speeds. Also, the spine road in both the east and west sides should be sinuous in order to slow traffic. An example in Alphington Village would be Smithfield Road.

The internal layout is not currently acceptable as it needs to be more specific and agreed before planning consent is given, not when the houses are 'occupied', as stated in DCC's response.

5. Local education provision

The DCC report states that there is no primary school capacity within a reasonable walking distance of the proposed development, and that the early delivery of this, including a nursery, is critical to mitigate the impact of the development and support the delivery of a sustainable community. The TDC Framework has specified a primary school for all 630 pupils to be built in the new local centre south of the A379, but states that this is only required when 200 houses are occupied in TDC's area - and secondary education after 1,000 houses are occupied. We are relieved to see that in order to avoid the problem of 300 houses in the ECC area being occupied with no additional primary spaces being provided, DCC is imposing a condition that prevents occupation of houses in Alphington until a site for a new primary school has been secured, suggesting that this development cannot proceed until after the TDC one.

The Forum considers it essential to have another primary school nearer to Alphington to meet the needs of the new community north of the A379, comprising approx 3,000 people, including approx 300 primary children. The proposed site south of the A379 may be the location preferred by DCC and TDC, but is not one that will appeal to many families on the north side of the A379, owing to the difficult access for small children. The decision to have only one very large primary school so far from Alphington has been strongly opposed by ECC and the Forum in letters to TDC and DCC, numerous consultations and meetings, as well as articles in the local press, and the ECC Executive has written twice to the TDC Executive to tell them that they will refuse to pay any CIL money towards this school, as it will not meet the needs of all the new families. So why not build a primary school on your own land in Alphington?

We have recently sent a letter to John Hart asking for the sale of Alphin House to be stopped and the land used for an extension to Alphington Primary School, which might alleviate this issue of lack of provision, as well as current transport problems around the school and in Ide Lane. We sent a petition some time ago to TDC signed by at least 500 people asking planners to leave the field south of Markham Lane for a future school that would also provide a community hub for new residents. A copy of this petition was sent to Dave Black and Sarah Ratnage and is also attached to the email with this letter.

6. Library services

CIL money from the Aldens Farm development should not be used for library provision on the south side of the A379 as the access is impractical for most Alphington residents. They can easily get to the St Thomas Library on the A bus or have a local library in Alphington Community Centre, staffed by volunteers, which is preferable to having to travel some way and across the A379.

7. Historic environment

Because Alphington Village has so little green space and there is virtually none shown on the Aldens Farm plans, apart from children's play areas and allotments, it is important for local residents that the site of the historic monument can be easily accessed from the Aldens East development, as well as pathways to the Matford Brook valley, which should be open to everyone for recreation, as the SANGS Ridgetop Park will be too far and too steep for most people to access easily, thus making it unfit for purpose.

SUMMARY

Out of all the concerns expressed constantly by Alphington residents, the greatest one is the fear of extra traffic through the village. An open letter has been sent by the Campaign for SWE Smarter Travel (CWEST) and several Exeter organisations to the Highways Department requesting a complete review of the transport strategy in the South West Exeter area, as we can all foresee huge problems on our roads, causing utter chaos in addition to even more air pollution than we already have.

Unfortunately the reply recently received from Jamie Hlland gives us absolutely no hope of anything constructive being done in the near future to improve this extremely serious and frustrating traffic situation. The Forum has always insisted that the new Marsh Barton station and Park and Ride are not going to act as mitigation factors for Alphington residents, as drivers from the new development will still come through our village - an ECC Conservation Area - damaging the historic buildings and polluting the air. The Marsh Barton station and Alphington/Ide Park and Ride may both be a misuse of funds in our opinion, as neither will achieve the desired objective. For this reason, if these 'mitigations' do go ahead, the contribution should come wholly from the TDC developers. After all, it is stated in their Development Framework that a new Park and Ride is essential for their development, not necessarily for the ECC one.

Apart from this huge concern about ever-increasing traffic, we wish to emphasise that our residents are not objecting to these plans for Alphington for any other reason than deep concern for the new community north of the A379, as they will have virtually no facilities to help them form a cohesive society near their homes. At least if there were a school, as originally shown on the South West Masterplan, they would have a local centre that could form a hub for social events. There will be little employment nearby, so they will have to use their cars unless they are able and willing to cycle, walk or use expensive buses, which they cannot be forced to do. The 0.11 h area allowed for a community building would probably have to incorporate a shop to save them having to go some way to the new local centre or into our village where there is no car park. The new schools, surgery and sports centre will be in the new community centre, resulting in yet more driving and crossing of the A379.

In short, your response to ECC does not appear to reflect many of these concerns and seems generally to agree with the NPS outline plans, which is not of course surprising considering NPS is your agent.

However, we believe that you have the power to control and coordinate the South West Exeter development as you are the only body that can oversee the whole project. There is no doubt that the residents have been ignored all along and we feel the time has come for swift action to review the purpose and sanity of building 2,500 new homes around a major arterial road that you said originally must not be down-graded and yet allowed developers to do just that by slowing the traffic with numerous traffic lights and crossings, which will be used by thousands of new residents.

Finally we urgently request a meeting with you and your colleagues to discuss these vital concerns before the outline plans are approved by both ECC and TDC as, despite various consultations, we do not believe that our constructive comments and reasonable objections have been considered seriously, which surely should be our right as responsible and caring citizens.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Meadowcroft, AVF Chairman

Cc: Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

Cllr Roy Hill

Karime Hassan, ECC

Dave Black, DCC

Ben Bradshaw, MP	Cllr Bob Foale	Richard Short ECC	Sarah Routledge, DCC
Cllr John Hart, DCC Leader	Cllr SteveWarick	Chris Hussey, ECC	Jamie Hlland, DCC
Cllr Rachel Sutton, ECC Planning	Cllr Chris Musgrave	Paul Jeffrey, ECC	Chris Liversidge, NPS