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Dear Sir / Madam

**Mid Devon Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension (EUE)**

**Consultation Draft Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) December 2013**

**Comments on behalf of Blundell's School**

**Introduction**

The below comments are submitted on behalf of Blundell's School in response to the above consultation exercise currently underway. These comments should be read in conjunction with our previous submission (dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013) to the May 2013 consultation exercise and also follow our attendance at the urban extension land owner meetings, the Site Allocations DPD Examination and representations to the various Local Development Framework consultation documents. The School has also been in direct contact with representatives of the landowner consortium and has also submitted comments to the current undetermined application by Waddeton Park (reference 13/01616/MOUT).

Rather than repeat the comments in detail from May 2013 we summarise the key concerns that were raised by the School as follows:

- The overarching concern is the impact of traffic on the School and the soundness of the related evidence base supporting the SPD;
- Infrastructure triggers and delivery including new access points and traffic calming measures (and deviation from the adopted policy position);
- The design of traffic calming measures on Blundells Road;
- Cycle and pedestrian routes and the need to avoid conflict with pupils crossing;
- The need to maintain a degree of self-containment through an appropriate mix of housing and employment;
- The need to future plan beyond 2026 in terms of infrastructure;

- The impact on the high quality landscape setting of the School;
- Concerns regarding visual and traffic impact from any future Energy/Waste facility and impacts on the setting of the School from industrial uses next to the School playing fields;
- Concerns regarding employment mix and seeking to reduce B8 uses with HGV movements;
- Confirmation that the School playing fields cannot be part of the community infrastructure provision for the EUE;
- Confirmation that the retail elements will not become a destination in their own right and therefore generating additional traffic movements;
- Further clarification on the scope of phasing and relationship with infrastructure delivery which holds the key to the acceptability of the whole EUE; and
- The requirement for the constraints of the School and its high quality setting to be recognised.

### Comments

The fundamental concerns of the School are based on the impact of all aspects of the EUE in terms of traffic on Blundell's Road. Therefore the School has appointed specialist highways advisors Hydrock to undertake a detailed analysis of the transport evidence base that underpins the SPD. We summarise the findings of Hydrock within the answers provided below, however their detailed assessment is provided within the attached document and should therefore be read in conjunction with this letter.

We have answered the questions as set out within the consultation questionnaire as per below although our answers focus on the traffic related impacts and the evidence of Hydrock.

**Q. *Employment development will be in the northwest of the site, north of Blundell's Road. The rest of the site (excluding large areas of open space) will be developed for housing, with a new primary school and neighbourhood centre located in the centre of the site adjoining Blundell's Road. Do you believe these uses are being proposed in the right places?***

The School has previously sought confirmation that any employment development which generates significant HGV movements or traffic movements will be able to access the A361 and therefore employment development north of Blundells Road is logical in this regard. However the School has sought confirmation that employment development (which might include the energy/waste proposal) will not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the School campus in terms of visual or landscape impact. We have particular concerns with the proposed location of the energy / waste proposal immediately adjacent to the School's land given the scope for impact on the setting of the School from the height and scale of the potential building and associated chimney or flue additions.

We note that the SPD (page 79) now infers that the majority of the employment will be B1 uses with enhanced plot densities (40/50%) and we therefore seek clarification that this assumption is reflected in the traffic generation assessment given the potential increase in trips, we discuss this further below.

The School has noted that the positioning of the neighbourhood centre and primary school in the centre of the site adjoining Blundells Road may assist in reducing traffic speeds.

**Q. Any other comments about the distribution of development?**

We also seek clarification on the approach to phasing (section 6.3) in light of the current early application by Waddeton Park. The School has concerns that a level of self-containment will be challenging if phases of development come forward without a mix of uses hence the current objection to the Waddeton Park application for purely residential development. The piecemeal approach to development will also have significant implications for the delivery of infrastructure as noted below.

**Q. The draft masterplan proposes around 1500 new homes, which is slightly below the adopted policy target. Housing density will vary across the site. Section 5.1 of the draft masterplan describes the different character areas across the site and the existing and proposed density of development. Do you agree with the design approach set out?**

The School has previously noted that the provision of a lower density development will assist in reducing trip generation from the proposals. We would expect the location to be targeted at the family housing market rather than higher density smaller units.

**Q. Any other comments about the density of development?**

No

**Q. The Council must ensure that infrastructure is provided in a timely fashion alongside the development, without making the development unviable. Pages 96-97 of the draft masterplan set out the trigger points for when infrastructure is expected to be delivered. Do you agree with the trigger points suggested in the draft masterplan for the following key areas?**

- **Access and transport**
- **Education**
- **Community infrastructure**
- **Open space, recreation, play and green infrastructure**

We have previously highlighted the seriousness and the significance of the traffic issues for the School in terms of pupil safety, air quality and the attractive rural character that is fundamental to the School's business. The timely delivery of access and transport infrastructure has a major effect on the School and the safety risks of both pupils and staff. The school is completely bisected by Blundell's Road. Therefore, the School's fundamental anxieties and concerns are only really addressed by the delivery of proposed new link onto the North Devon Link Road (A361) and an additional access onto Heathcoat Way.

Blundell's School is obviously keen to ensure that the highways upgrades and new access arrangements are delivered at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the impact on the School is minimised. The School has maintained the view that the proposed triggers within the original DPD should be implemented as evidence has not been provided by the landowners or Devon County Council which justifies a deviation at this stage. We note that further evidence has been produced by the County Council (in draft) in the form of an updated Option Assessment Report (December 2013 Final Draft). The School's appointed transport advisor Hydrock has therefore reviewed this latest report and the other transport evidence supporting the SPD as well as that supporting the application submission by Waddeton Park (a separate response has been issued to the Waddeton Park application 13/01616/MOUT). The key findings of Hydrock are summarised below from the issues detailed within the attached document.

#### *Proposed Triggers*

We note that the December 2013 version of the SPD proposes the following access infrastructure triggers:

- On and off slip roads south side of A361 to form construction access prior to any development.
- Left in / left out south section of junction to A361 and highway link between this junction and Blundells Road – phase 1a – prior to occupation of any development.
- Phase 1 of traffic calming scheme at Blundell's School and improvements to roundabouts at Heathcoat Way and Lowman Way – phase 1a – prior to occupation of no more than 200 dwellings or\* 4,000 sq.m. employment.
- Completion of full movement grade separated junction to A361 and phase 2 of traffic calming Blundell's Road (between Post Hill and Heathcoat Way) – phase 1b – prior to occupation of no more than 600 dwellings or\* 10,000 sq.m. employment

\*We seek clarification with regards to the implications of the term 'or' as this appears to allow both elements to reach the threshold before the infrastructure is triggered. Therefore clarification is sought to confirm that the implications of the cumulative impact from 199 units and 3,999 sq.m. of employment has been assessed. The same applies to the second trigger at 600 dwellings. We would suggest that the triggers need to be based on agreed traffic impacts from a combination of the uses. The employment element also needs further clarification given the different level of traffic impacts arising from different B class uses.

We have sought confirmation within our response to the Waddeton Park application as to the extent that these measures at least have been assessed and incorporated into the application submission.

#### *Hydrock Review*

The key findings of Hydrock confirm that there is no evidence to suggest that a proper assessment has been made of the A361 + Heathcoat Way access option. Rather, these access options have generally been assessed in isolation, and DCC confirm in their

evidence-base reports that no detailed assessment has been undertaken in relation to the form or capacity of a new junction onto Heathcoat Way. Hydrock consider that this is a key flaw in the evidence-base which leaves its conclusions open to challenge.

Hydrock notes DCC's prediction that significant additional traffic would be generated on Blundell's Road through the School as a consequence of not providing a Heathcoat Way access. This is considered inappropriate given the problematic nature of current traffic volumes on Blundell's Road, which already exceed levels that would be deemed appropriate for a school environment - surveys undertaken for DCC demonstrate that this leads to regular 'near misses'.

Proposals for traffic calming on Blundell's Road do not take full account of relevant current guidance. Hydrock's view is that they are focussed on an engineering-led approach which is at odds with current guidance and takes little apparent account of wider impacts on how non-motorised users would perceive the highway environment.

Hydrock are concerned that no weight restrictions on Blundell's Road are currently proposed, given that there is no apparent analysis setting out what the actual levels of Heavy Goods Vehicles might be in future without such controls in place.

The ultimate conclusion of Hydrock's analysis is that there is insufficient evidence at the current time to enable the School to agree either the proposed infrastructure supporting the EUE, or the phasing of those interventions so as to protect neighbours including Blundell's School.

**Q. Any other comments about infrastructure delivery?**

The School is very concerned that the SPD refers (section 6.7) to the Council still considering the best mechanism to deliver the required infrastructure (i.e. CIL or section 106). This decision needs to be made and included within the SPD to set out a clear strategy, especially highlighted by the submission of an early application by Waddeton Park.

We have previously noted that the document should also consider future proofing and the potential risk of additional development beyond the EUE boundary.

**Q. Do you have any other comments about the draft masterplan?**

We recommend that section 7.10 is amended to reflect the requirement to consider the cultural heritage and setting of the School campus in masterplanning for the proposed development.

We believe that the Site Constraints and Opportunities (2.4) need to recognise the constraint of the School and the rural high quality setting of the campus. Hitherto it does not appear to have done that adequately.

We also seek to reiterate the point regarding future proofing beyond this SPD should further phases come forward in the future and the need to accommodate the provision of a second new access.

**Q. Are you a) A statutory consultee (e.g. Town/Parish Council, Environment Agency) b) A community or special interest group (e.g. Civic Society, Campaign to Protect Rural England) c) A member of the public**

The School wishes to be considered as a statutory consultee on the basis of the potential impacts.

**Q. Members of the public only - do you live... a) Within the boundary of the allocated site at Post Hill b) Elsewhere in Tiverton c) In Halberton d) Elsewhere in Mid Devon e) Outside Mid Devon.**

n/a

### **Summary**

The School welcomes the opportunity to provide these comments and will continue to take an interest in the masterplanning exercise for the urban extension. The above comments should also be read in conjunction with the attached review by Hydrock and our comments to the current application by Waddeton Park (13/01616/MOUT). The School and their advisors are happy to meet with the Council, the County Highways Team and the landowners to discuss the above fundamental concerns with the transport evidence. We therefore hope this will then enable all parties to agree a robust basis from which to proceed in assessing the impacts of the development and enable the School to fully understand the implications for Blundells Road in particular. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Pete Stockall MRTPI Associate - Planning, Development and Regeneration**

**For and on Behalf of GVA Grimley Ltd**

Enc. Hydrock Briefing Paper

cc. Blundell's School

Devon County Council Highways



## Technical Note

Project: **Tiverton EUE**

Subject: **Masterplan Review: Highways**

Prepared: **James McKechnie**

Date: **30<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

Revision: **-**

Date: **-**

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### 1.0 Overview

1.1 This Technical Note has been prepared by Hydrock Consultants Ltd to provide analysis and comment on the Mid Devon Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension (EUE) Consultation Draft Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) December 2013, on behalf of our client Blundell's School.

2.0 **Devon County Council (DCC) Briefing Paper (reproduced in Mid Devon District Council Cabinet Report 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013)**

#### *Heathcoat Way Access*

- 2.1 At paragraph 5.2.2 of the Committee Report, it is noted by DCC that providing two accesses to the EUE would '*result in the largest benefits to the transport network*'. We agree with this statement, but cannot support DCC's subsequent view that '*given the reduced size of the EUE development and large cost associated with implementing both accesses, this is not an economically viable option and a single access, with traffic calming to Blundell's Road is adequate highway infrastructure to accommodate the development*'. This statement is not supported by current guidance or by technical evidence.
- 2.2 It is unclear how DCC has concluded that the provision of accesses onto both the A361 and onto Heathcoat Way would result in an increase in vehicle traffic through Halberton and Sampford Peverell. The conclusions set out in section 5.3 of the Committee Report appear to relate to the provision of the Heathcoat Way access only – i.e. not alongside a new junction onto the A361 – as confirmed at paragraph 5.3.9 of the document.
- 2.3 There would therefore appear to be little reason to include this assessment in the Committee Report. It has the potential to mislead readers, including Members. What should have been assessed is the effect of both the Heathcoat Way and A361 accesses, in line with the requirements of policy in respect of the EUE.

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- 2.4 No evidence has therefore been produced by DCC to show that a Heathcoat Way access would be detrimental to the operation of the local highway network.
- 2.5 The brief consideration of design 'issues' later in the report is not detailed enough to lead to the conclusion that an access onto Heathcoat Way is undeliverable.

### *A361 Junction*

- 2.6 At 5.3.12 – 5.3.13 of the Committee Report, a similarly problematic assessment is made of the new A361 junction in isolation. The summary of benefits should not include the statement that the A361 junction is a 'Key attribute of the EUE site' – being a 'key attribute' is not a benefit as such.
- 2.7 With regard to the new A361 junction, we have not had sight of the Road Safety Audit mentioned at paragraph 5.4.7. It would be helpful to have sight of this document, which is required before DCC's conclusions regarding the junction's appropriateness can be confirmed as robust.
- 2.8 We agree with DCC's observation at 5.4.11 that higher traffic flows on summer Fridays and Saturdays could lead to queuing and delay at roundabouts on the A361. However, we understand from DCC that no specific summer peak testing has been included in the traffic modelling work which they have undertaken. We consider this to be an omission.

### *Blundell's Road Traffic Calming*

- 2.9 With regard to paragraph 5.5.1, we assume that the Committee Report means that various options are being assessed, rather than 'various offers'. The final arrangement for Blundell's Road, including traffic calming as appropriate in relation to early phases of the EUE, must be agreed based upon robust evidence and the appropriate standards, not on 'offers' by developers.
- 2.10 Given the unacceptable proposals made by developers in relation to the current planning application, and that we are led to understand that DCC is presently working up a revised scheme, we do not comment at length on the options set out in the Committee Report.
- 2.11 We have previously expressed a view to DCC that the overall volume of traffic on Blundell's Road through the school is excessive and problematic. We do not therefore accept that an analysis based largely on traffic capacity, rather than on the effect of traffic on the overall school / highway environment for all users, would be appropriate based on prevailing guidance.

### *Construction Traffic*

- 2.12 We would recommend that a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan should be agreed in consultation with the School. Controls should be put in place as far as possible to limit the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles travelling on Blundell's Road through the School.

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### *Highway Triggers*

- 2.13 Whilst it is stated at paragraph 5.7.1 that consideration has been given to pedestrians crossing Blundell's Road, this appears to be in the context of delay, rather than with regard to the highway environment for non-car users. This is not in accordance with guidance set out in *Manual for Streets*, IEA guidelines, or the CIHT publication *Transport in the Urban Environment*.
- 2.14 As a consequence of the above, and due to the other concerns set out in this letter, the triggers and infrastructure interventions are not agreed.

### *Weight Restriction*

- 2.15 It is unclear why DCC considers that a weight restriction on Blundell's Road would not be necessary. A more complete analysis should be undertaken, based on the likely volume of Heavy Goods Vehicles, with reference to relevant guidance (including the IEA *Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic*).
- 2.16 Similarly, it is not considered that the development should be permitted to proceed in the absence of a construction access onto the A361. No evidence has been provided to our knowledge to suggest that such an access would have an unacceptable impact on the viability of this large Urban Extension.

### **3.0 DCC Trigger Point Justification Note 30<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

- 3.1 We note DCC's observation that 12 'near-misses / almost near-misses' were observed on Blundell's Road during the 12 hour survey period. This supports the School's view that existing traffic conditions are problematic, and that a worsening of conditions would be unacceptable.
- 3.2 Whilst we understand the approach taken by DCC, using the PV<sup>2</sup> calculation to determine the need for formalised pedestrian crossings. However, this approach is based on a methodology which dates from 1995-96, well before the publication of *Manual for Streets* in 2007 and the subsequent widespread adoption of its principles.
- 3.3 The DCC note goes on to assess the probability of pedestrians being able to cross the road in gaps in current / future traffic. At present, a 20% probability of being able to cross is proposed. With the EUE development, this drops to as low as 8% in some scenarios.
- 3.4 It is unclear why DCC believes that a probability of crossing the road of 14% would be 'acceptable'. We do not accept the DCC conclusion that impacts would be acceptable with less than 1,000 dwellings in place.
- 3.5 We agree that the implementation of pedestrian guard rails 'along the whole section of road funnelling the pedestrians to the designated crossing(s)' would be inappropriate and unacceptable. This would be contrary to current best practice and the recommendations of prevailing guidance.

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3.6 We have noted (see GVA letter) that the way the triggers in the latest SPD are drafted is unclear with regards to the term 'or' as this still appears to allow development upto the threshold for each element of residential and employment development. The triggers need to be based on traffic levels agreed for a combination of the uses. Confirmation will also be required with regards to the assumed employment uses given trip generation differentiation for each B class. Therefore the consequential impacts of this issue and all of the above brings into question the reliability of the SPD triggers.

#### 4.0 DCC Tiverton EUE Extension: Option Assessment Report, Final Draft, December 2013

4.1 We assume that paragraph 2.5.10 refers to an alternative access onto Heathcoat Way, as opposed to an alternative access onto Blundell's Road.

4.2 It is disappointing that Blundell's School is not identified as either a key stakeholder or even a neighbour in section 3.2 of the report.

4.3 Table 1 of the report (paragraph 4.1.2) indicates that the consequence of the proposal by DCC and the EUE developer not to provide a Heathcoat Way access would be a predicted 900 additional two-way vehicle trips on Blundell's Road (AM peak) and 800 additional trips in the PM peak. This is highly problematic for the School.

4.4 The report goes on to repeat parts of the analysis referred to earlier in this Technical Note (our paragraphs 2.1-2.5). It is particularly concerning that paragraph 4.1.9 of the DCC report confirms that no detailed junction model has been prepared to test the operation of a new junction onto Heathcoat Way.

#### 5.0 Summary and Conclusions

5.1 This Technical Note has assessed a number of evidence-base documents related to the Consultation Draft EUE Masterplan SPD. We have not sought to reproduce comments submitted previously or provided separately in respect of the current planning application.

5.2 Our conclusion is that there is no evidence to suggest that a proper assessment has been made of the A361 + Heathcoat Way access option. Rather, these access options have generally been assessed in isolation, and DCC confirm that no detailed assessment has been undertaken in relation to the form or capacity of a new junction onto Heathcoat Way.

5.3 We note DCC's prediction that significant additional traffic would be generated on Blundell's Road through the School as a consequence of not providing a Heathcoat Way access. This is inappropriate given the problematic nature of current traffic volumes on Blundell's Road, which surveys undertaken for DCC demonstrate lead to regular 'near misses'.

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- 5.4 Proposals for traffic calming on Blundell's Road do not take full account of relevant current guidance. They are focussed on an engineering-led approach which is at odds with current guidance and takes little apparent account of wider impacts on how non-motorised users would perceive the highway environment.
- 5.5 We are concerned that no weight restrictions on Blundell's Road are currently proposed, given that there is no apparent analysis setting out what the actual levels of Heavy Goods Vehicles might be in future without such controls in place.
- 5.6 The ultimate conclusion of our analysis is that there is insufficient evidence at the current time to enable us to agree either the proposed infrastructure supporting the EUE, or the phasing of those interventions so as to protect neighbours including Blundell's School.

**Hydrock Consultants Ltd.**

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