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17.2.14

Local Plan Review,  
Forward Planning,  
Mid Devon District Council,  
Phoenix House,  
Phoenix Lane,  
Tiverton, EX16 6PP

14<sup>th</sup> February, 2014



Dear Sirs

**'Have Your Say'**

### **Local Plan Review Consultation Options Summary – January 2014**

Whilst writing this response we are aware of a deluge of water descending from the heavens and at the same time we are looking at your scenic image of Tiverton as presented on page one of the above summary. This sums up the essential elements that lead us to register our objection to the following aspects of the plan, namely Landscape and Water.

For the purpose of our objection we refer to:

Exeter Hill – TIV 13

Referring again to your photograph of Tiverton as shown in the summary it presents an image of all that is the best of Tiverton 'a green and pleasant country town nestling in a panorama of lush and beautiful hillsides.' Sadly the re-submission of this site, if approved for inclusion in the local plan, would introduce a grotesque 'blot on the southern **landscape**' should subsequent planning permission for development be approved. It would be to the visual detriment of the residents of Tiverton as well as impacting on the enjoyment derived by the large numbers of visitors and tourists. It is known that there are considerable numbers of people visiting and enjoying The National Trust property at Knightshayes Court, including its gardens and park. The 6.09 hectares site at Exeter Hill, therefore, would be clearly visible to all concerned, if developed. Building on this large site would have a disproportionately significant impact, as it would set a precedent for Tiverton to start overflowing its present natural physical boundaries. Tiverton is 'set principally within' the Exe and Lowman valleys and this fundamental feature is one the most defining aspects of this historic market town.

The Exeter Hill location was the subject of a previous planning application that was rejected by the Council and later by the Planning Inspector but where it differs this time is that all of the higher elevations of the site have been included in the plan. The higher reaches about the new dwelling known as 'High Mount' which replaced an older dwelling of the same name. This new building is very visible from many more vantage points of Tiverton, as it is built at a much higher land elevation beyond the existing building line. It will, therefore, serve as a marker to the visual impact that a development of fifty five new buildings will have on the hillside. This will be

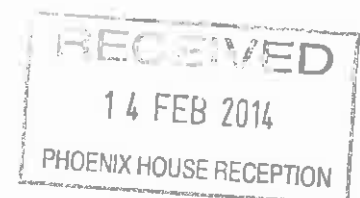
particularly applicable for areas from the North West to the East of Tiverton including National Trust's Knightshayes. We have enclosed photographs to substantiate this observation. It is also worth noting that there will be a danger of run-away vehicles on this proposed development as evidenced by the run-away vehicle damage to the wall at the foot of Exeter Hill. Incidents of this nature are always more likely during icy ground conditions as is the danger to pedestrians of injuries due to slipping.

As, mentioned previously, this location was the subject of a planning application rejection by both the Council and the Planning Inspector we have to ask 'what has changed in such a relatively short timescale? The answer must be very little other than the weather which then leads on to the other element of our opening paragraph 'water'.

Living as we do on Exeter Hill we have seen, at regular intervals, raging torrents of water descending down the hill on both sides of the road boosted by the stream of water that emanates from the stables and its access lane. We have again enclosed photographs to visually confirm this statement. As this amount of flood water is sourced from a very limited catchment area, we ask what the impact will be with a development of 55 dwellings plus their driveways and service roads. With the service road(s) being laid on the hillside at an angle of 20% or 1 in 5 the run-off has the potential to be much greater than that shown on Exeter Hill as the catchment area is greater.

The rejection of all future planning applications will allow the land to retain its considerable grassland water retaining properties. To the best of our knowledge this grassland has not been cultivated for the last 30 years or so. It is worth noting that Dr Francis Kirkham in the Tiverton Gazette's Country Comment dated 28<sup>th</sup> January, '14 stated that old grasslands can hold up to five times the volume of water per unit area compared to agriculturally-improved pastures. Additionally, it holds a greater store of carbon than even woodland soils. He further stated that it provides a much more effective buffer against flood risk. We would also add that it considerably reduces the volume of water entering the sewer system. This is, of course, particularly relevant when we look at the photograph of the water descending Exeter Hill. It is, also, most pertinent in the light of current Government concern over flooding and the millions of pounds now being allocated for flood prevention.

Moving on now to the emergency access proposal which presumably will be by way of Exeter Hill, unless there is provision to prevent general vehicular movements by a barrier it will be the access of choice as the majority of vehicles emanate from Great Western Way. Access to the Exeter Hill development via Devonshire Rise, as proposed, would add to an already congested thoroughfare as fifty five dwellings must create several hundred additional movements per day. It should also be noted that these additional traffic movements via Devonshire Rise would also enter Canal Hill. It is already acknowledged by the Council that the junction of Exeter Hill and Canal Hill is substandard but with the additional traffic flows as well as those from The Avenue also entering Canal Hill opposite this same junction it would even more dangerous and difficult. There is also only one narrow pavement on the south side of Canal Hill and the additional traffic is also likely to lead to a number of significant accidents



If, however, Exeter Hill is the preferred access point for emergency vehicles, we would draw your attention to 'Murphy's Law'. The 'Hill' is always a test for heavy goods vehicles. Breakdowns, failures and stalled lorries are a common occurrence. Looking at the considerable time-scales ahead, if fifty five dwellings are completed it is inevitable that an emergency vehicle will one day become trapped or, at best, delayed by a stalled heavy goods vehicle. A selection of photographs showing such stalled vehicles are enclosed for examination. The 'road closed' photograph is the final proof of a potential delay.

Finally, with the incessant demands for more and more land in and surrounding our 'green and pleasant country town' perhaps the current thoughts of developing land to the east of Junction 27 should be grasped. This is the gateway to Devon, it does not impinge on the 'Vale' aspect to the west, and, 'long term' has a natural capacity for expansion.

Yours faithfully

(  
John Wood  
Mary Wood,  
Triscombe,  
Exeter Hill,  
Tiverton,  
EX16 4PL



EXETER HILL - TIV 13  
AS SEEN FR. 1 KNIGHTSHAYES > WEST MANLEY LANE



↗ SITE FROM KNIGHTSHAYES SHOWING 'HIGH MOUNT' & VERY VISIBLE



↗ SITE FROM WEST MANLEY LANE & HIGH MOUNT





EXETER HILL FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS



HORSDON FOOTBRIDGE



CHEYTTIS COMBE



MOORHAYES



CHEYTTISCOMBE





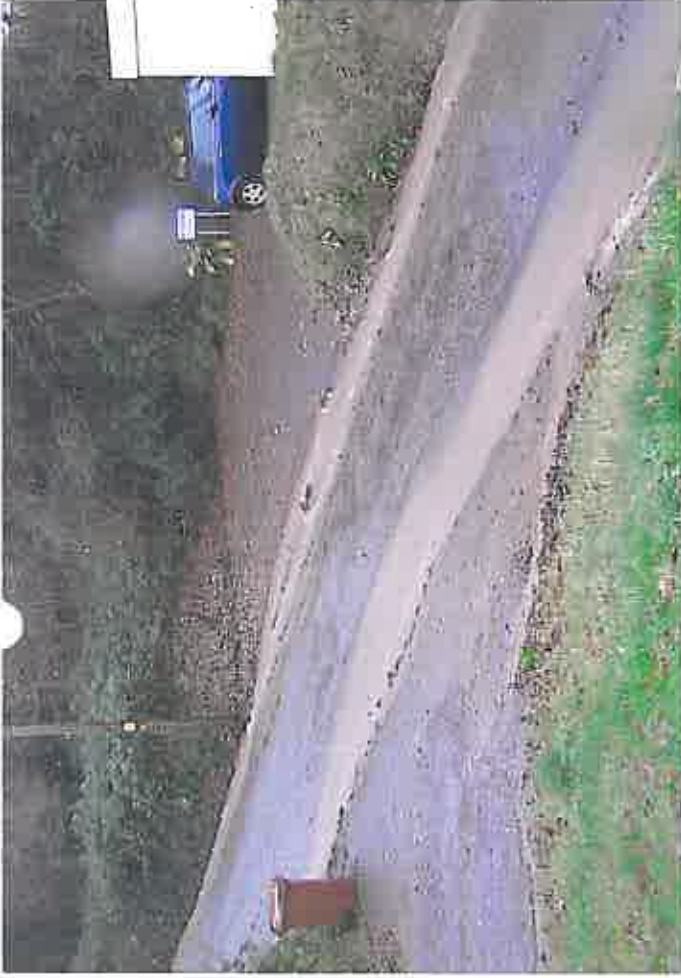
KNIGHTSHAYES COURT AS  
SEEN FROM SITE



CLOSE-UP OF KNIGHTSHAYES COURT  
AS SEEN FROM SITE



FLOODING ON EXETER HILL



STREAM FROM STABLES & ACCESS LANE



STALLED LORRIES ON EXETER HILL  
5 ROAD CLOSURE





Gazette

# workingweek

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## Country comment

with environmental consultant  
Dr Francis Kirkham,  
of Nymet Rowland, Crediton

## Much to value in old grassland

THE area of old 'permanent' pasture has declined over the years, in Devon as elsewhere.

This trend seems to have accelerated recently, partly due to concern about imminent changes in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that will prevent ploughing up of grassland older than five years, but also due to currently high grain prices. This is not surprising, since the fertility released by ploughing these grasslands will produce a hefty crop of wheat, for example, without the need to add fertiliser.

The most valuable

saw-flies, crane flies, leaf hoppers, crickets, springtails - the list goes on. These in turn provide food for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Many birds that are largely seed-eating rely on a range of insects to feed their young during the summer.

Old grassland topsoil is high in organic matter and typically represents a greater store of carbon than even woodland soils. Much of this carbon is released in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> on ploughing, adding to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Furthermore, the turf and topsoil of old

grasslands from the nature conservation point of view, including the species-rich Culm pastures of West Devon and North Cornwall, are protected under statutory designations or voluntary agri-environment schemes. But the value of old grasslands extends beyond providing habitat for rare plants and butterflies. Even when not particularly rich in wild flowers, their turf and topsoil is home to a whole host of insects and other invertebrates that complete their lifecycles either above or below ground or both. This includes earthworms, beetles,

grasslands can hold up to five times the volume of water per unit area compared to agriculturally-improved pastures and therefore provides a much more effective buffer against flood risk - particularly important in the light of recent weather.

Current rules aimed at preventing the ploughing of unimproved grasslands older than 15 years, or the use of fertilizers or herbicides, seem to have let many valuable pastures slip through the safety net. It is uncertain whether the new CAP reforms will alleviate this problem or whether they will, overall, be seen to have exacerbated it.

## Third possible buyer walks away from centre

A POTENTIAL buyer for the former Tourist Information Centre in Tiverton has pulled out.

It is the third prospective owner that has withdrawn from a deal with agent Thorne & Carter since it was put on the market in October.

A spokesperson from the property agency said: "This is now the third person who has made some headway towards taking it over but for one reason or another has pulled out."

"I think the capital expenses is more than they

had first imagined."

They added that there has been several enquiries about the premises, which is being marketed as a cafe/restaurant.

The TIC service has since moved to Tiverton Museum in Becks Square.



The empty TIC build

# Cut red tape and ruin landscape, Govt is warned

OUTRAGED Exmoor and Dartmoor bosses say the Government's aims to cut planning red tape could have a devastating effect on the national parks.

But Whitehall will ignore fierce opposition to proposals, which could lead to the go-ahead for building and development work in some of the Westcountry's most precious countryside areas.

The park authorities are particularly alarmed by the proposal that will allow - as of right - the

against the proposals formulated by planning minister Nick Boles. One Westcountry chief executive claimed the move "effectively takes us back to what could become an uncontrolled piecemeal development across all rural areas of England".

Dr Nigel Stone, chief executive of Exmoor NPA, said: "In simple terms, where you currently see an agricultural building sited and built for agricultural purposes you are looking at a potential development site with very little by way of planning control."

"This would enable up to three new dwellings to go up without the opportunity for local scrutiny or planning permission while anyone wanting a former window or a porch would still need to go through the full planning process."

Bill Hitchens, chairman of Dartmoor NPA, said his members unanimously opposed the changes.

He said: "We believe it will lead to suburbanisation of Dartmoor, contrary to the Government's desire to promote localism, because it would negate parish and district councils' commenting on plan-



Impact on the national park."

A spokesman for England's national parks spoke of the collective fears of rural planners around the country.

"Valleys full of fields dotted with stone field barns could be transformed into a semi-urban environment with roads and overhead power and phone lines," he said. You would have gardens, cars, washing lines, greenhouses and everything else that goes with a home springing up in some of the most stunning - and nationally protected - countryside in England.

"We understand the Government's aims to regenerate our rural communities by making the best use of redundant and under-used agricultural buildings. But the proposals would have the opposite effect."

The national parks said the move would not lead to the availability of more affordable homes.

A spokesman said: "This will just lead to more of the same: more second homes and more dream homes for retired people."

"Housing developed in this way would contribute little to meeting local community needs. Nor

would it provide the support desperately need to hold on to local services, such as primary schools. On the contrary, it simply increase the pressure services already struggling to cope with a disproportionately elderly population.

"Barn conversions tend very expensive and are likely to deliver 'second home on the fields' than an affordable 'home on the farm'."

However, both Exmoor and Dartmoor have far more.

"You could be looking at a scenario in which 30,000 agricultural buildings converted into posh second homes or holiday cottages in the West. With automatic permission allowing developers to build at each site that means you be looking at 90,000 new potential properties in what was the agricultural Westcountry."

"That begs the question: will the farmers go about business? What you might see is a rash of new planning applications in 10 years' made by farmers who want up new barns," said the officer.

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Government said: "Strong planning protections remain in for national parks and an outstanding natural beauty which are some of this country's most important national treasures."

"The best way to support to ensure that local people know their areas best and that their most are included in decisions about their future."

Look out for more Country Comment

in your Gazette next week