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TIVERTON EASTERN ACTION ('T.E.A.')

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24th March 2014

Draft Local Plan Review- Comparison of Housing Options

Dear Forward Planners,

Tiverton Eastern Action fully agree that Mid Devon needs more houses and that realistic and deliverable targets need to be achieved. We have examined the various options for the amount and distribution of development set out in the Local Plan Review and we appreciate the restraints that limit the future development of Tiverton. However we are writing to express our concerns about the possible selection of the option to extend growth further east to include most of Hartnoll Farm. We feel that such an option is likely to be favoured because of an apparently compliant landowner, and because of existing plans for infrastructure improvements for the development of the Eastern Urban Extension, However, we feel this choice would be mistaken and there are a number of well-established and very strong arguments for not choosing this option:.

1. Hartnoll Farm is 2 km from Tiverton, and a considerable distance from urban services. Tiverton is already being squeezed further and further eastwards and it is becoming an unsatisfactory urban sprawl. The building of more houses at Hartnoll Farm would represent the worst type of ribbon development
2. The soil of much of Hartnoll Farm is classified as Grade 1, which is the very best and most versatile land. There is very little land of such quality in this area of Mid Devon, and good quality farming land is in short supply.

3. The C769 through Halberton has already reached problematic levels, and there is strong evidence that this road could not cope with the extra vehicular movements which would inevitably be generated from new housing developments at Hartnoll Farm, totalling 1100 dwellings. The road through the village is already, noisy and dangerous, with frequent congestion, and we feel that any new development which increases these issues should be refused.
4. New residential development at Hartnoll Farm would trigger the building of a new relief road to the north of Blundell's School ('TIV 4'), resulting in the loss of amenity for many people, including residents of Gornhay Orchard and Coleman Close, as well as a potential increase in flood risk in the Lowman flood plain, loss of recreational space at Blundell's School, and the possible closure of Jane's Scrap Yard. Assuming that 1,250 new houses are eventually built in the Eastern Urban Extension, plus 300 north of Blundell's, and that Hartnoll Farm is selected for future development, the new road would be built after the building of 450 of the targeted 1,100 houses at Hartnoll Farm. It would be surprising if the cost, and the potential problems involved in building this road for the remaining 650 houses, would not be found to be financially and environmentally unviable.
5. Hartnoll Farm lies east of Manley Lane, outside the boundary of Tiverton and wholly within the parish of Halberton, forming a natural and attractive 'Green Belt' between Tiverton and Halberton. The appeal of this would be destroyed by further development, and, if new development were to reach the Grand Western Canal, the housing would, at Crown Hill, join up with the built-up area of the village of Halberton. This urban sprawl would have the potential to destroy the sense of community and the individual character of this thriving village.
6. The Grand Western Canal is one of Mid Devon's main tourist attractions. It is a designated Conservation Area, County Wildlife Site and Countryside Park, and the towpath is also part of the National Cycle Network. Visitors enjoy extensive views from the canal across attractive countryside, and the development of Hartnoll Farm would mean that these views, and one of the most cherished local landscapes, would be lost. Vegetation screening is not an acceptable alternative as it produces a green corridor with very

limited views. In Paragraph 17 the NPPF lists core planning principles, referring to the need to:

'contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value'.

7. Much of Hartnoll Farm is visible from an extensive area to the south and west and development there would have an adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of this rural area.
8. Unless the possible development was carefully managed there would be a considerable increase in surface water runoff into the Ailsa Brook, which has frequently flooded in the West Manley Lane area, and is the main source of water to the environmentally sensitive Tidcombe Fen SSSI. In Paragraph 103 the NPPF states that *'when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and only consider development appropriate in areas at risk of flooding informed by a site-specific flood risk assessment'*, and, in Paragraph 118, that *'proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effectshould not normally be permitted'*.
9. There is much potential development land north of the A361, especially north of Gornhay Cross, which has greater development possibilities than Hartnoll Farm. This area is closer to the centre of Tiverton, it has far better transport links to town centre services, it is close to the A361, and the soil is Grade 2 and 3. The Gornhay Cross area is well away from Knightshayes and the site of the Roman Fort, and well above the Lowman Valley flood-plain, so It is very hard to justify the validity of the statement in Paragraph 2.12 of the draft LPR (Local Plan Review) that *'Development north of the A361 would be divorced from the town and have unacceptable impacts on flood risk, a scheduled ancient monument and the setting of Knightshayes Park and Garden'*. MDCC should surely consider this alternative option very closely.
10. Option 2a (Junction 27/Willand) in the draft LPR has greater advantages for future development than Hartnoll Farm: it is a transport hub, being close to the junction of the M5 and A361 and Tiverton Parkway station; it has the potential to be an attractive location for industrial, commercial and retail

development; and it would be an ideal residential location for people commuting into Exeter, Taunton and elsewhere along the M5.

Option 2b (Cullompton East) has similar advantages to Option 2b, being near Junction 28 of the M5 and close to a proposed new railway station. In addition, it would have excellent access to the many existing urban facilities in Cullompton.

Your sincerely,

Jeremy Salter

County Councillor Des Hannon