

This is seen as a precarious moment in time for Tiverton and Mid Devon.

At the heart of it is the GWC Conservation Area which is central to Tiverton's identity, its heritage and its economic future. We must tread carefully here.

Tiverton is immensely proud and protective of the GWC. And this proposal, to build so close to the canal, would inevitably be extremely harmful.

History has taught us and the future demands that we protect the GWC conservation area. Tempting as it may be to build along this appealing asset, we have resisted doing so for 50 years for good reason.

A housing estate here would cause severe harm to the setting and appearance of the canal at Tidcombe. On this elevated site, the houses would of course be highly visible and intrusive in this tranquil, peaceful landscape. Inevitably, there would be a noticeable increase in noise from people, mowers, movement of cars, dogs etc.

And light pollution from 100 dwellings, from vehicles and from street lighting would lead to a negative change of landscape character which would certainly change for the worse the experience of canal users here at Tidcombe. This severe harm to the Conservation Area is unjustified and cannot be mitigated adequately.

We've heard that the GWC is a unique and extremely valuable community asset to have on Tiverton's doorstep. Walkers, cyclists, runners, fishermen, rowers and paddle boarders, canoeists photographers and artists are all drawn to the tranquility and ambience. It is recognised as playing an important role in wellbeing and mental health. The canal towpath also provides much needed accessibility for wheelchair and pushchair users.

The views from the tow path are a key part of the conservation area and canal experience, on foot or on water, and these views set the scene within which the landscape and heritage assets interact. From the tow-path, looking south across the canal at Tidcombe, we see a landscape painting, the foreground being the proposed site rising from the canal and wedded to the green horizon above. It is one painting, one view. And it would unquestionable not be enhanced by adding a housing estate in the foreground. Nor could it be mitigated.

The much discussed glimpses are not merely partial views. The glimpses draw the eye through the gaps between native trees into the site and are themselves an important landscape feature, expertly managed by the Canal Manager Mr Mark Baker, who cares for the banks all along the canal. Seasonally changing, they

give a taste of the stunning landscape before the full picture opens out a few steps beyond.

The appellants Landscape Witness acknowledged that the views from the Horse drawn barge are an important consideration and she conceded that no such impact assessment has taken place. The horse drawn barge owner has clearly stated that Tidcombe is **the** place where he pauses the tour and directs the passengers to breathe in the views, the heritage, the natural world and to listen to the silence. ...

The proposal would cause substantial and longterm harm to the local economy as the GWC attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The town relies on this business. Tourists come to this stretch of the canal for its rural, scenic and tranquil features that are in contrast to the urban setting at the other side of Tidcombe Bridge.

The heritage Horse-drawn barge, Devon's Best Small Attraction of 2024 is at risk as the owners have clearly stated. It's a delicate operation as it is, and we want it to remain Tiverton's USP. One of just 2 such horse drawn barges, it is of national and educational significance and "The Iona" is listed on the National Historic Ships UK register. It is in itself a heritage asset. It must be protected and this proposal poses a threat to it.

It is established that setting contributes to heritage assets and that is never more the case than here at Tidcombe. We have to consider the significant harm to the CA as a whole, rather than just the individual parts, the cumulative effect of building houses. And here, the impact of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. I refer you to the previously mentioned Venn Diagrams...

The new builds on the proposed site cut across and divide the strong historical links between Tidcombe Hall and its Home farm, Little Tidcombe. These important heritage buildings have a functional and historical connection with the GWC as we've seen. The character of the landscape and its sense of identity are very strong at Tidcombe and the proposal would cause unavoidable and unjustifiable harm negatively impacting their historical setting and the conservation area.

Tidcombe Hall is iconic and its prominent position makes it a highly visible feature on the landscape especially on the approach into Tiverton from the top of Newtes Hill. The proposal also fails to preserve the important tree lined entrance to the hall and the historic Tidcombe Lane would lose its distinct character.

Previously declared an EIA site, Natural England's most recent report strikes a notably cautionary tone regarding the risks of contamination to the Tidcombe SSSI Fen (less than 0.5 km from the site) and to the canal especially during the construction phase. The appellants' Ecology and Drainage witness acknowledged that a similar contamination into the GWC recently during construction of the Edendale Housing Development 4km to the east at SPEverell would have been 'significantly harmful' to wildlife. This proposal fails to provide certainty from harm to the Fen and the GWC. It instead leaves a legacy of risk for the future.

Regarding the TRO which, to be clear, was first mooted at the time of the appellants second planning application without any public consultation. The proposed closure of Tidcombe Lane to cars is unanimously condemned and considered disrespectful to the neighbourhood. It would undoubtedly have a very harmful negative impact on the community of Tidcombe, effectively severing the artery that connects Tidcombe at its heart, Tidcombe Bridge. This is unjustified.

It is a matter of planning judgement to assess the balance between Harm and Benefit; to consider carefully the cumulative impact of the material harms. Both direct and indirect.

This is a particularly sensitive site: listed buildings; a conservation area; Tidcombe Fen SSSI, Local Nature Reserve, Country Park, a listed heritage Horse drawn barge and of course The GWC.

A great many legal and designated protections have long been in place to recognise this and to provide safeguards. And they have indeed protected it successfully since 1975.

The material harm caused by the Tidcombe Hall Development is NOT outweighed by the claims of public benefit. The development is inappropriate in its setting, its size and its style.

The planning proposal fails to restore Tidcombe Hall and its wider landscape in such a way as to preserve its character, appearance and historical integrity. And it categorically fails to preserve, protect and enhance the setting and significance of the GWC conservation Area.

For these reasons, the appeal should be dismissed.