

Mrs R. Hanna
 28 Pinwood Meadow Drive
 Exeter, Devon
 EX4 9JP

2nd July 2020

Exeter City Council Planning Department
 Civic Centre
 Paris Street
 Exeter, Devon
 EX1 1JN

Re: Proposed Development - 20/0538/OUT

Dear Sir/Madam,

My family and I recently moved to Exeter from London. Our property is directly affected by this proposal. We chose the Pinwood Meadow Estate due to it being a dead-end road, having a neighbourhood green and a community feel. The fields have been a bonus we have benefited from particularly during lock down. I understand that cities need to plan for growth and this includes new housing however, I feel this is an ill thought-out proposal for this area and is a departure from Exeter's Development Plan. Therefore, I strongly object to the proposal development for the following reasons:

Access

The direct impact of increased traffic on Pinwood Meadow Drive and Celia Crescent is a concern. I appreciate that the development has two points of access however neither are easy access. For a no through road, I am amazed at the volume of traffic that uses Pinwood Meadow Drive. It is rare that I drive up or down Pinwood Meadow without having either to pull in or reverse back and wait for oncoming traffic, this is throughout the day. There are three clear pinch points along the road that are tricky to navigate due to blind bends and traffic parked on both sides of the road. Celia Crescent has similar issues.

Our shared driveway requires us and other neighbours to reverse out directly onto Pinwood Meadow Drive and can be a challenge with traffic now and would be near impossible with increased traffic volume and a through road. The higher density housing in the proposed development is all at the Pinwood Meadow Drive end of the site, meaning our road will become the primary access route.

One could argue that placing yellow lines along the road and perhaps making it a controlled parking area would ease the traffic concerns. The reality is that many of our neighbours have nowhere else to park but on the road. Currently as a dead-end road parking is nearly entirely by residents, therefore existing cars would still need parking space even if permits were issued. Several of the houses can only park on the road due to their deeds clearly not allowing them to park in front of their garages or them having no driveway.

The proposed new development is also aiming to be a sustainable development having less parking available to residents. London has been doing this for a long time and the reality is this does not work. One such development located in the heart of Barking town centre has cars parked in every spare space and is dangerous to drive through. It felt so claustrophobic that we ruled out purchasing

property in the area. As a sustainable build, limited car spaces are planned for the proposed new development - subsequently the cars from this build will spill over into Pinwood Estate and Celia Crescent, placing more stress on surrounding roads and causing stress as local residents fight for parking. This is not going to build community cohesion.

Green Space

The green off Spruce Close is a beautiful space that is used by the whole neighbourhood. Exeter County Council recognise this area as historic park in their Green Infrastructure Strategy Phase 2 (2009, p. 12). In the same document, it is identified as an Historic Parkland Enhancement Area (Devon County Council initiative, 2009, p17). For over 20 years, people have enjoyed picnics, sports, communal quizzes (three of which have occurred during lockdown) and relaxing in this space. Currently our children can safely access the space and enjoy frisbee, den making and playing football in the open space. Adding a road through this space fundamentally changes the use of this area. For example, children will not be able to kick football without it potentially damaging a car or themselves being in danger. I fear the road will also become a premium parking space which is not in keeping with green. Children will not be able to be left unsupervised in the space. Currently our children often do circuits unattended with local neighbours looking out for each other. This has been our lifeline during the recent pandemic and for others too without big gardens.

If access is approved for this development, I sadly believe that it will see the end of any of the green space in the fields above us, fundamentally altering the landscape of Exeter. This goes against Exeter's own policies. The Exeter Fridge Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2007, p5) identify these fields as having a high landscape sensitivity forming part of a strong positive rural backdrop to the city and therefore this study concludes that this land should be protected from development. Many of us agree. Only in 2015, these fields were identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as having potential for '**zero dwellings**'. The developers themselves recognise that this housing would have an impact on the landscape, but they argue that the desperate need for housing means this should be ignored. Again, with others, I strongly disagree.

The landowner clearly sees the value of this land too as they are claiming a higher tier Countryside Stewardship Grant that is provided by central government to help protect countryside (Magic Defra Map, 2020). The higher tier covers the more environmentally significant sites, commons and woodlands according to the government's own website (gov.uk website, 2020).

Is national policy so skewed that land which is clearly valued as green space can just be taken away forever? How is this not a waste of government funds protecting an area for conservation one moment and then saying it is not an area for conservation the next?

Flood Risk

Many local residents have raised their concerns about potential flooding of local properties. We have a small patch of grass outside our front door that is constantly saturated after a heavy rainfall and takes a few days to dry up after the rain stops. At the very least, a detailed study of flood risk to existing properties even on Pinwood is necessary.

Local Infrastructure

The developer states in their Planning Statement:

"the evidence submitted makes this development a sustainable location. It is immediately adjacent to a developed urban area and will integrate well with it. It is within walking distance of a range of local

facilities, including a local Co-Op foodstore and a pharmacy, a day nursery, a Primary School, a public house, and a range of bus stops giving widespread access to the city and beyond by public transport. Polsloe Bridge railway station is also easily accessible from which there are local services to the city centre and beyond” (p14 – statement dated April 2020.)

I strongly disagree with this statement for the following reasons:

Schools

Having recently moved to Exeter, I had the joy of trying to get the children into a local school mid-year. We had no choice and were assigned our local school which wonderfully is a good school and thankfully the children are doing well at. Both Pinhoe CofE Primary and Stoke Hill Junior school are oversubscribed. All local Exeter schools are at least 95% capacity, and this is before many of the new developments are completed (Church Hill, Harrington Lane, Exmouth Junction). Willowbrook Primary has already been expanded to accommodate a growing population and is also over 95% subscribed.

The only new school that Devon County Council has agreed to open currently is Monkerton Community Primary School which is less than 2 miles away from the proposed development, meaning that it would be considered an acceptable distance to walk to. However, one must also consider the terrain and not just the distance. Hilly walking at least twice a day for pupils (and 4 times a day for parents walking their children to school) is clearly not a reasonable assumption. Many parents have to work and parents are often dropping children to school on their way to work or to other commitments and a walk that is well over 30 minutes, with a steep ascent upon return, is not likely. The local council were concerned about a bottle-neck of traffic when the new Monkerton school site was originally approved. I question whether Monkerton school will have enough capacity to meet the demand of the already approved developments that are already closer to the new school yet alone additional demand upon them from this proposed development off Spruce Close.

Come October, we will need to apply for a secondary school place. St James school is near-by but we have already been warned that we must apply early as there is no guarantee that we will get a place there as they are at capacity.

GPs and Dentists

GP practices are oversubscribed as is stated in the letter from Devon Clinical Commission Group (June 2020) - the surgeries in the local catchment are 112% capacity or 3000+ patients over subscribed.

I am unable to find an NHS dentist currently and other members of the community have voiced the same concern. One lady I spoke to had tried every dental surgery she could find and was still unable to locate a dentist. I believe she eventually found one in a village outside Exeter requiring her to travel there by car.

Highways

As many local residents have pointed out, attempting to exit Pinwood Meadow Drive and Chancellors Way is becoming increasingly difficult and will only get harder with the agreed developments in Harrington Lane, Church Hill and Exmouth Junction. Beacon Lane already has bottle-neck problems due to the narrowing of the road near Cheynegate Lane. Using the exit over Venny Bridge down Chancel Lane is difficult and another blind spot. It is becoming increasingly difficult to turn right at the end of Chancel Lane. My husband has found this increasingly difficult to

navigate, so he often chooses to avoid it by detouring via the double round-a-bout in Pinhoe. However, the Pinhoe Area Access Strategy (2019 addendum) is aiming to direct unnecessary traffic away from this spot. Beacon Lane heading down to Polsloe Bridge is also struggling with an increase in traffic regularly causing queues of traffic on either end. Beacon Heath and surrounding are going to ground to a halt if road access is not improved. *Pinhoe Area Access Strategy (2019 addendum)* clearly identifies the need for improvements but has limited ways of doing this, particularly with a new road through Exhibition Field no longer a viable option.

Shops

The proposed development speaks about local shops being nearby. If I have run out of milk and want to pop to my local shop, it is a minimum 30 minute walk for me at the top of Pinwood currently (yet alone beyond). The entire journey home is uphill, including the steep ascent up Pinwood Meadow Drive at the end. It is rare that time allows for this quick 'pop to the shops.' We are far more likely to hop in the car. The developer (April 2020) refers to the local supermarket as a Co-op local, however this information is not correct. When we moved in February 2020, it was no longer a Co-op but a Spar, which is more of a convenience store than a supermarket. The pharmacy they refer to has also shut. Our closest pharmacy and post office are at least 20 min walk with a steep gradient the whole way home and this will be even more for the proposed new development.

Public Transport

Having recently moved, I am currently looking for work and have actively looked to take public transport or use an alternative mode of transport. Unfortunately, when I have planned routes to possible jobs using public transport, the scheduled journey times have increased significantly - often taking three times as long and involving multiple transfers. The frequency of the bus service is also an issue. It is not just a question of putting in a bus-service - which by the way I don't think is possible up Pinwood Meadow Drive - but the frequency of the service is also an issue. This then raises questions of financial viability. If this is not adequately considered, then all talk of a bus-service is just sweet talk and doesn't face reality.

Our closest train station (Polsloe Bridge) is a brisk 20 min walk away. Again, it is a steep gradient the whole way home, usually taking considerably longer than 20 minutes and the station itself has an infrequent service. Are more trains going to be laid on? Is there a commitment to do that? Who is guaranteeing it, for how long? Again, just throwing in the comment that there is a train station 'nearby' doesn't mean people's transport needs will be met.

Also, if one comes here and you check for yourself, riding a bike up the steep incline of Pinwood Meadow Drive is not for the faint hearted and only the most avid cyclist does it. It would be even less attractive common for anyone on the proposed new development, which would entail cycling even further up a steep hill, especially at the green access point.

Environmental Concerns

Exeter has set an ambitious target to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 (Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan, April 2020). One of the '12 Ingredients for Future Placemaking' stated therein, recognises that:

"visual connections and landmarks are key characteristics of Exeter: views from the city centre to the landscape around and from the outlying neighbourhoods to the Cathedral, river and other notable landmarks. These visual queues (op. cit.) help with way finding and as points of orientation" (p.10).

These fields and beyond are part of this visual landscape.

We do not know what life after Covid-19 will look like. It is likely that changes in work patterns and more people working from home, more often, will be part of the outcome. For many, the wellbeing of being able to go for a walk and easily access green space from home, has been and will continue to be paramount. If we lose the space near to us, it will mean that we will have to drive to access green space that we currently have on our doorstep. This surely is counter-productive and not sensible planning?

In Conclusion

The developer says in *Design and Assess Document: Design and Access Statements 1 – 25* this development results in

“building a strong and competitive economy by delivering housing land of the right type in the right place and at the right time to support urgent and compelling growth requirements” (p10).

I believe I have strongly argued and demonstrated that this is the ***wrong type of housing, in the wrong place at the wrong time!***

Please strongly consider the impact that this development will have on this generation and the coming generations of Exeter. I fear if developments like the one proposed go ahead, the Garden City that Exeter wants to be known as, will not be possible.

Yours Sincerely,

Rachel Hanna