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Sent: 26 July 2022 20:33
To: VE.RT
Subject: APP/Y110
Attachments: Joint Councillor statement re appeal APPY1110W213287921.pdf

Please accept the attached representation re Appeal APP/Y110/W/21/3287921 which supports the original refusal of outline planning permission for the construction of up to 61 dwellings and associated infrastructure at Home Farm Between Church Hill And Park Lane Exeter Devon - this site being commonly known in Pinhoe, Exeter as Higher Field.

The representation is submitted jointly on behalf of all 3 Pinhoe ward City Councillors, and the Pinhoe and Mincinglake division County Councillor.

Cllr Trish Oliver
Exeter City Councillor for Pinhoe Ward

Please note that I currently have no phone signal at home, so for any urgent enquiry, please contact my fellow councillor, Cllr Duncan Wood on 01392 580005.
If you need to speak to me, please let me have your number, by email, and I will call you when I am next in a place with a signal.

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Statement from Pinhoe City Councillors Trish Oliver, David Harvey and Duncan Wood and County Councillor for Pinhoe and Mincinglake, Tracy Adams

-re Appeal APP/Y1110/W/21/3287921 against refusal of planning permission for 61 houses to be built on Higher Field, Pinhoe ECC 21/0223/OUT

We provide our evidence below, to represent local residents, and to augment the case of Exeter City Council and Exeter Green Space Group that the planning balance is tilted towards refusal of the appeal on the grounds that the benefit of 61 homes does not outweigh the harm to the landscape and green space of these hills to the north and northwest which are explicitly mentioned in the Exeter current Core Strategy as having a distinctive character and requiring “safeguarding” from Exeter’s housing growth.

We have all received much contact and correspondence from residents opposed to development on Higher Field, and in June 2021, Full Council received a petition from 2201 residents calling for protection of green space in Pinhoe. Thankyou for reading and considering our evidence below.

Planning balance and Housing supply

Our view is that Exeter City Council’s recent evidence on housing supply is measured and reasonable.

The appeal against planning refusal for Land at Pennsylvania Road, Exeter EX4 5BL (Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/W/20/3265253) was dismissed in January this year - the Inspector took the view that, although the council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, the shortfall is modest. There is no reason why the housing land supply should be less than judged by the Inspector back in January now.

In fact, alongside our new local plan, our Liveable Exeter project is progressing at pace. The feasibility study has been funded by national government who are keen to support this pilot of “15 minute communities” on brownfield sites - building energy efficient homes which will reduce both fuel bills and carbon footprint; whilst the access to amenities by walking or cycling will improve physical and mental health of residents - and also contribute to net zero carbon targets for our city. This is a tangible way of meeting our housing supply requirement without needing to encroach further on the green circle which surrounds Exeter.

Planning balance and sustainability

This scheme would deliver up to 61 homes and would make a contribution to the supply of housing for the city. In the context of the Council's modest shortfall in its supply of deliverable housing sites, the addition of 61 dwellings carries moderate weight.

Where a five year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated, paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It is our view that the proposed site is environmentally unsustainable. Church Hill is a narrow steep hill with sections with no pavement in many sections. Increased traffic from the Home Farm development makes it unpleasant to walk or cycle along so it is overwhelmingly unlikely that it would support a "walkable neighbourhood" and that the development would be sustainable. The alternative pedestrian route through Home Farm and through Broadparks Avenue and Danesway is a very long way round to the key amenities of old Pinhoe - the butcher, the Spar shop, the hairdressers, the local school, the local take aways, and local pub.

Furthermore the public transport system is not fit for purpose and is overwhelmingly likely to lead to high levels of car use and dependency. There is a mismatch between information from the Appellant and the reality of the bus service.

WHAT THE APPELLANT SAYS:

The nearest bus stop is a short distance away on Harrington Lane (less than 600m). This is served by the following bus services:

- Service L – which runs to and from the city centre (operating 6:32am to 23:35pm Monday to Saturday with a reduced Sunday service)
- Service B - which serves, inter alia, the city centre bus station and Pinhoe Train Station (operating 5.26am to 6.36pm Monday to Saturday with a reduced Sunday service).

- In addition, access to Service 1 (which serves Tiverton, Cullompton, Uffculme and Exeter City Centre) can be reached via bus stops on Main Road, Pinhoe (within 800m of the site).
- The site is less than 1km walk from Pinhoe Railway Station, which offers direct rail services to Exeter city centre (4-5 minutes duration), Exeter St David's (9 minutes duration), Honiton (15-20 minutes duration), and London Waterloo (3hrs 15 minutes duration). This service operates approximately every hour between 7:32 – 13:34 and between 21:37 and 23:51. Outside of these times trains are approximately every two hours. Bus Service B provides a direct connection to the Station, stopping on Pinn Lane adjacent to the station.

THE REALITY:

Stagecoach is making a number of changes to their bus services from 31st July 2022 as the first step towards a commercially sustainable network when Government funding (to cover fare revenue losses) ceases in October. The changes also reflect reduced passenger numbers, increased driver and fuel costs and a continuing shortage of drivers.

- **Service L - City Centre to Pinhoe and Pinhoe to city centre will cease to run.** It will be replaced by:
- **A reduced new Service B1**, which will operate every 60 minutes Monday to Saturday and Sunday and Public Holidays between Exminster and Pinhoe via City Centre. An hourly evening service will continue to operate. B/2B Exeter – Exminster – Dawlish (2B)

Services B and 2B will be replaced by reduced new services B1 and B2.

The Dawlish to Exminster section of service 2B will reduce to operate during peak times only. At other times there will not be through service, but it will be possible to change from service 2 to B1/B2 in Exminster.

From Exminster B1/B2 will operate every 30 minutes to the City Centre, continuing only hourly as service B1 to Pinhoe via Stoke Hill and B2 to Science Park via Tithebarn Way. There will be an hourly evening service on the section of route from the City Centre to Pinhoe. The evening service between the City Centre and Exminster is withdrawn.

On Sunday there will be an hourly daytime service between Exminster and Pinhoe and an hourly evening service between the City Centre and Pinhoe

1/1A/1C Exeter – Bradninch - Cullompton – Willand - Tiverton

The service will operate every twenty minutes Monday to Saturday daytime between Exeter and Cullompton, with all journeys operating via Bradninch. **Only one journey per hour will continue to Tiverton** via Willand and Halberton. Within Cullompton all journeys operate via Exeter Road, no longer serving Swallow

Services 1 and 1A will no longer serve Uffculme, Tiverton Parkway or Sampford Peverell.

*DCC has awarded Stagecoach a tendered contract to provide a replacement service for the withdrawn section of route, Tiverton to Cullompton via Tiverton Parkway and Uffculme. This will be registered as the 373 service which was its original designation. **The frequency of the service will vary between 60 – 120 minutes throughout the day.** The first journey will be 06.00 from Tiverton and the last journey departs Cullompton at 19.54. **It had been hoped to replicate the frequency of the current service, but none of the bus operators had the resource to fulfil this tender option.***

- The cost of train fares from Pinhoe to London Waterloo has risen sharply with **£196.25** being the price for an open return departing tomorrow as I write this. This is a serious disincentive to people using the train to London, or places en route, and will make it more likely people use their cars for journeys.*

Granting planning permission to this development that would clearly undermine the NPPF's sustainability objectives. It is our view that these conflicts should be given substantial weight in the overall planning balance.

Planning balance and Landscape Setting

The NPPF states that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the most important policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless adverse impacts “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh the benefits.”

We believe the statement from the appellant that the value of Higher Field as part of the landscape is not significant is disingenuous.

The new application directly contravenes the 2013 permission for the initial Home Farm development. This permission stipulated that the proposed site would be left as an undeveloped, open space both to create an appropriate green setting to counterbalance the development and to maintain the 'city landscape'. As this permission was eventually granted after a lengthy appeal process, this infers that the developer's request to further develop into this area should be considered not only tenuous in its validity, but also disrespectful of its initial granting.

This is an extract taken from Waddington Parks Statement of Community involvement from the original Home Farm Development application submitted in 2013:

Q. Why are the “top fields” not included

A. The land to the north of the proposal is outside of the outline planning application area and will remain in agricultural use. ***The landscape impact of development in these “top fields” has been assessed and development here is considered visually too intrusive.***

The appellant describes the use of this site for building as “natural rounding off” this is clearly not the case as this land forms part of Pinhoe’s northern ridge line and is clearly higher than the line of development marked off by the Quarry development. The site lies on the historic northern ridge, is part of a vital wildlife corridor and is ***not***, as the appellant claims “urban fringe”. It is historic open countryside.

Our view is that the urbanising effect of this development will not be “modest” as stated by the appellant.

Proximity to green space is a key amenity which enhances quality of life for Exeter residents. A frequent walk for residents of Pinhoe is to climb Beacon Hill, survey the glorious view, and then return past the ancient Church and down Church Hill to the old centre of Pinhoe - or do this route the opposite way. The feeling of connection with place, history and nature would be severely diminished if Higher Field were to have houses built on it.

Equally, standing at the much loved gate at the corner of historic Higher Field, there is a feeling of connection with the history and place of Pinhoe, - where Vikings fought Exonians in the Battle of Pinhoe in 1001, and with your feet grounded on the iconic Pinhoe Ridge you can enjoy watching wildlife (including deer, rabbits and foxes) in the field, and the beautiful panoramic view over the city and beyond.

The application site is protected under Core Strategy (CP16) and this policy was informed by the Exeter Fringes Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (EFS). The site is located within the Hills to the North of Exeter and is included in Zone 8 of the EFS and as such is given the highest rating in terms of Landscape Sensitivity and low/medium capacity for housing "except single properties in very carefully located positions avoiding wider visibility". While development has occurred in parts of Zone 8, the application site sits higher to the north, on the same contour as Pinhoe Church, and forms part of the Pinhoe Ridge skyline and green fringe of Exeter. A development of 61 homes would diminish the character and landscape setting of Exeter and is in contravention of CP16. As has been noted in many objections, the applicant's Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) undermines the prominence and visual impact of the site and the proposed "new public open space and woodland / meadow" cannot compensate for the loss of a natural, rolling, agricultural field that commands far reaching views, can be seen from miles around, is home to numerous wildlife species, and has been here for centuries.

Building on the site would irrevocably damage the landscape views enjoyed by so many from so many places in and around Exeter.

A site in Zone 14 (Ludwell Valley Park) of the EFS, which has been the subject of a number planning applications since 1962, was refused again on appeal in 2018 (17/0121/OUT). The Appeal Inspector concluded *"When all of the above is weighed together, including the shortfall in the supply of land for housing, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposed development and in particular, the likely effects upon LVP and the landscape setting of Exeter, significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal"* (Ref: APP/Y1110/W/17/3179387). Many of the landscape features described in the Zone 14 site resonate with those of the proposed site and as such the proposed development should be refused. *It should also be noted that the importance of the North field of Home Farm remaining undeveloped was acknowledged in the Appeal Decision (Ref APP/Y1110/A/14/2215771) relating to the current Home Farm south field development (ref 13/4802)*

We strongly believe that the benefits of providing 61 homes are significantly outweighed by the adverse impact and damage to this iconic landscape site.

Cllr Trish Oliver, Cllr Duncan Wood, Cllr David Harvey, Cllr Tracy Adams

26.7.2022