

## Tiverton's proposed Eastern Urban Extension (EUE)

When the area of land to the east of Tiverton (now the proposed site for the EUE) was suggested for housing and industrial development some years ago, there were objections raised on the grounds that road communications with Tiverton town would be problematic. The only existing road that could be used is that which passes through Blundell's School campus. Mid Devon District Council ignored these comments and went ahead and allocated the area for development. Thus we are now where we are. Developers are waiting to move into the area. And the only solution to the highways problem appears to be a very expensive new junction with the A361.

The A361, or North Devon Link Road, is just what the name says. It is the link road between the M5 motorway at Junction 27 and the North Devon area. It is designed to take the high volume of traffic to that part of the north Devon coast, especially holiday traffic, from the Midlands and the south-east that uses the motorway system. It is a fast, motorway type of road (at least as far as the Bolham roundabout) with traffic moving at typical motorway speeds of 70-plus mph. Devon County Council, in considering the design of the proposed new junction, recognize this by insisting that a roundabout junction would not be suitable: a roundabout would slow traffic too much, leading to congestion on the Link Road.

But by making a new junction for the EUE, local traffic will be using this fast road for local use. Mothers taking their children to school, shopping expeditions, visits to the doctor or dentist, etc. The A361 is not suitable for such use and with the high volume of local traffic will become very dangerous.

The proposed new junction will bring the slip roads, the bridge over the A361 and the roundabout feeding them very close to existing residential properties in Uplowman Road and Pool Anthony Drive. The noise from the existing traffic using the Link Road and from all the additional traffic associated with the EUE (both cars and commercial vehicles) using the new junction will become intolerable for local residents. Added to this will be the air pollution from vehicle exhausts and light pollution from the street lighting that is required for this type of road junction. Because of the clearance required under the bridge all of the structures associated with the junction are going to have to be raised well above existing ground levels, making all of these problems significantly worse for the local residents.

To counter this the highways engineers are suggesting a noise attenuation bund between the new slip roads and roundabout and the affected dwellings. Such a massive structure, even closer to the houses, would result in an unacceptable loss in amenity for the residents. The noise barrier proposed will be 2 feet *higher* than the ridge of the roof of an adjacent property and only 20 metres from it.

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All possible means of reducing the impact on local residents of the junction with the A361 must be employed. Accepting the arguments that a grade-separated, half-cloverleaf junction is required, consideration must be given to moving the over-bridge westwards and positioning it on the skew, thereby enabling the roundabout to be moved away from the rear of Pool Anthony Drive properties and for the slip roads on the south side of the Link Road also to be further from these dwellings. The height of the roundabout and the slip roads feeding it would be lower (because the Link Road itself falls westwards). And the height of the noise attenuation structures could also be reduced from the presently proposed level.

In summary my suggestions for the new junction are:

1. move the over-bridge westwards and adopt a skewed orientation for it:
2. place the associated roundabout beyond Pool Anthony Drive, possibly to align it with the junction with Blundell's Road:
3. tighten as far as possible slip road curvature and place the slip roads as close to the Link Road as possible:
4. employ quiet road surfaces throughout and re-surface the Link Road with similar material:
5. employ lighting with minimal light scatter properties:
6. minimize as far as possible the height of the bund.

This list highlights the steps that are necessary to mitigate, at least in part, the serious nuisance and unacceptable loss of amenity to local residents that the current highways proposals present.

Attention does need to be given to the drainage of the proposed junction area. There is a natural fall of land northwards towards the River Lowman. The Link Road at present appears to restrict this natural drainage in that in wet weather water ponds in the field to the south of the road. In addition, the noise attenuation bund must not impede the natural drainage of the area.

There are compelling arguments that, if the EUE is to be developed as proposed, local highways infrastructure must be in place before construction starts otherwise the road through Blundell's School and that through Halberton will become impossibly congested with construction vehicles. The early outline application by Waddeton Park Ltd will also require attention to the road infrastructure because both Uplowman Road and Putson Lane are unlikely to be able to handle the vehicles and equipment for the development site. The possibility of accessing the Waddeton site through the grounds of the former NHS site on Post Hill, while minimizing the loss of ancient trees and damage to natural habitat, should be investigated.

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There are other infrastructure issues that need to be addressed considering the size of the proposed EUE. Supplies of gas, water and electricity will need enhancement if problems for existing households are to be avoided. Surface water drainage will need careful control, given the poor porosity of the soil. Comments have already been made about this in connection with the Waddeton application (reference current flooding on Uplowman Road). Foul drainage is a particular worry, especially as SW Water is reported to consider the present system adequate, while residents in the town centre now live in fear of the sewers overflowing into the streets.

Devon County Council is currently consulting on waste disposal facilities. One site being proposed is within the industrial zone of the EUE. The siting of such a facility here should be strongly resisted. Within half a mile of residential properties and of Blundell's School, its boarding houses and its playing fields, the likelihood of air pollution problems and the effect of noise and light pollution from its 24/7 operation, and the noise and air pollution from the very large vehicles bringing waste to the plant, dictate siting in a more remote situation. Heat from the plant would be used to generate electricity to be sold to the national grid. It is a nonsense to suggest that the plant has a part to play in heating of the new houses of the EUE: they are all too far away to make this economical.

At the present time I live in a pleasant semi-rural, edge of town area: it is this that brought me to Tiverton to enjoy retirement. In this I am not unique. I hope that the proposed developments of the EUE will not destroy this part of Tiverton by turning it into a sprawling urban suburb with poor infrastructure and unwanted industry.

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