

Masterplanning Consultation: response to the Options Report for Tiverton
30 May 2013

This response is from a resident in the Post Hill area.

My response includes observations and comments made in addition to the questions posed within the Options Report. In my view certain assumptions made in the Options Report should be challenged in today's uncertain economic climate.



Observations and comments.

1. This initial phase of public consultation has been unduly rushed, with some poorly located and crowded displays making it difficult for people to see the papers and maps. The Pannier Market in the rain on market day was particularly unhelpful. Please can the next phase of consultation with the public include a static, permanent display in the spacious foyer at the MDDC's Phoenix Lane offices?
2. The development options offer residents forced choices between two draft plans that are virtually identical. Neither appears to be well thought through in terms of what it will provide to attract people and businesses into Tiverton and both focus on the big new road junction and waste to energy plant that will dominate the development to the north of Blundell's Road.
3. Targets for this development were agreed some years ago in a different economic climate; these must be reviewed and considerably reduced in the light of what is practical and realistic today. This means fewer houses and a close scrutiny of the types to be favoured including smaller units, affordable housing and sheltered housing as well as family homes.
4. The present Options plan lacks information on the nature and type of businesses the new area seeks to attract; this must be included in future plans because it has a major impact on the type of buildings put up on the designated employment land.
5. It is vital that the transport and services infrastructure is carefully planned and put in place as the phased development of the Eastern urban extension (EUE) proceeds. Existing services in the Post Hill area such as overhead power lines, drains and soakaways that flood in wet weather and narrow roads and lanes without footways all require updating if new homes and industries are to be built here. This does not agree with the Utility Services Availability Report (Section 2.2 on p4)
6. Concerns expressed in the options report over impact of this development upon the setting of NT Knightshayes are simply resolved: site the waste to energy plant away from schools and houses at M5 junction 27 to support industrial and employment development there, right beside a major transport artery and close to the railway station. Funds from the energy supplier can be added to Government grants to enhance J27 to carry the extra traffic that such development will bring, particularly a waste to energy plant that will run 24/7 and need material from cross county borders to be sustainable and economic to run.
7. The strangely designed suggested access route onto the EUE site from the A361 with its associated feeder roads and roundabouts could be avoided by a more cost-effective approach. For example, traffic accessing the NE side of the EUE could enter via a new short slip road from the A361 to join Uplowman Road close to the existing road bridge and leave to travel towards J27 by

using this bridge and re-joining the A361 via another short access slip road. Some improvements to Uplowman Road would be needed, but this is already known. Traffic accessing the NW side of the EUE should travel along the 'discarded pink route' into the area along existing slip roads from the A361, through the business park with just a short distance of new road required into the EUE site. Traffic movements within the EUE are yet to be finalised.

Question One

Balance between employment and housing

If the lower number of dwellings (1500) is adopted in these more difficult economic times and thought is given to the type of employment opportunities sought for the area, the right balance may be struck. Offices and businesses provide more jobs than warehouse operations.

For clarification, are the five gipsy pitches listed in addition to the four already beside Uplowman Road bridge?

How can air quality be improved by siting a waste to energy plant in the midst of the industrial/employment area? What about all the vehicle emissions from the lorries that will supply this plant – to be sustainable and economic, 24/7?

Question Two

Comments on the Vision for Post Hill

This vision is a waste of space. The environment we chose to live in for its rural aspect and lifestyle will be no more; gone for good. You are probably obliged to have a vision for the future but without doubt it will be urban and not the rural environment that brought us back to Devon.

Question Three

Enhancing natural/environmental features of the site

Clearly, Tidcombe Fen and the area along the Grand Western Canal must remain protected from development, so must the known archaeological features. Where possible, existing Devon Banks should be retained as part of the natural habitat; these are also characteristic of the local area and where degraded, should be enhanced by additional planting. The tree survey appears cursory and has omitted some mature ash trees, for example.

This area around Post Hill is rich in wildlife and birds of the open and wooded countryside. Somehow I cannot see a place for the buzzards, woodpeckers, swallows, fieldfares and sparrowhawks to survive here once development begins. The loss of quality farmland is probably inevitable, but should not be forgotten.

Question Four

How should the energy needs of the development be met?

We all buy our energy from the National Grid. A waste to energy plant will benefit its owners by the sale of power to the grid. I can see no way in which it can be construed as benefiting local residents – quite the reverse, as it will damage the quality of the local environment and the quality of life in this area.

I do not support a waste to energy centre in this development. I believe the notion of a district heating scheme to be a complex idea that will never be implemented.

If the Council wishes to raise income from a waste to energy plant, such a structure should be located at J27 on the M5 where road access is already established and is not in the midst of a residential area and close to schools. Air pollution, smells, increased traffic volumes and noise from plant and traffic are all major issues that illustrate the complete unsuitability of the proposed location for a waste to energy plant of any type. Consider also how enticing such a plant would be in attracting residents and new businesses to occupy the new EUE development. See also point 6 in my opening remarks on page 1.

Question Five

How should the increase in traffic be dealt with and where should the new highway junction with the A361 be located?

In my view this development does not need a major, costly set of slip roads and a huge oddly shaped new roundabout taking up a lot of land on both sides of the A361. A major junction on this scale is only necessary to feed a big structure like a waste to energy plant that operates 24/7. This is not wanted in the EUE and should be put at J27 to use an upgraded existing junction.

Phased development favours a phased approach to new roads and upgraded roads.

- a) initial construction of homes in the NE of the EUE could usefully be supported by a new restricted junction onto the A361 with traffic leaving the A361 close to the Uplowman Road bridge to enter the EUE and leaving the area via the existing bridge to re-join the A361 travelling back to J27. Strengthening Uplowman bridge and creating two slip roads would be far less costly than building a vast new junction. Upgrading of the lane beside the Golf Course would be necessary as part of this work.
- b) Traffic entering and leaving the EUE from the Barnstaple direction should use the existing Gornhay slip roads and travel along the present road through the industrial/employment area and along a short section of new road required to link this with the planned new EUE employment zone at its NW corner. This is the most cost-effective route by far. It is short and it is away from schools and the main residential areas. It uses some of the existing infrastructure.
(Discarded Pink Route)
- c) Within the EUE, roadways and main routes can then be re-planned using some of the ideas in Option 1 but without the need for any main traffic feeders on the N side of the A361, no major roundabouts and highways behind Uplowman Road and more space for employment land development.

Funds for these roadworks can be found from County Council sources without the payback from a waste plant on this site, as costs will be far less than the major construction outlined in the Options report.

As development proceeds, attention can be given to restrictions along Blundell's Road, possibly a one way route for the lower part of Tidcombe Lane and a residents only restriction along Uplowman Road from the new houses at the eastern end to the junction with Blundell's Road. Whatever happens, it would be a good idea in the interests of safety for Blundell's school to introduce some roadbridges for pupils' use; these operate successfully at other schools.

See also point 5 of my opening remarks on page 1; more detailed work is needed.

Question Six

What types of housing would you like to see, and where?

A mix of housing types and unit sizes is desirable, with no high-rise blocks which would be completely out of keeping in this area of Devon. See also point 3 in my initial observations and comments at the start of this response.

Question Seven

What types of employment should be included, and where?

The designated employment land should ideally provide a range of office and small units of accommodation. Warehouses and distribution centres are not appropriate for this location. A waste to energy plant is not appropriate. Take account of other centres such as the nearby Willand industrial parks and the new town of Cranbrook just 20 miles away with its associated science park, in targeting industries to encourage to Tiverton. Be clear on the target market.

Question Eight

What should be included within the areas of green and recreational space?

Details within the Options Report appear to cover most of what is required. However wildlife will take some considerable time to re-establish following such a major upheaval in the area.

What about including some allotments?

Question Nine

A local centre is proposed to include local shopping facilities, a community hall and provision for children and youth facilities. Where should this be located? What other facilities would you like to see in the local centre?

The suggested location of the centre in Option 1 seems about right.

Should this centre not have a local Health Centre?

What about space for a crèche or child-care facility to support working families?

The community hall would benefit from a couple of rooms suitable for local groups to use for meetings. The hall must have car parking facilities.

Sports facilities eg football and tennis would be a good idea.

Question Ten

Of the two emerging development options, do you have a preference?

There are elements in each that could contribute to a fresh start. This project is challenging but much could be done to prevent wholesale ruination of the present area by taking a step back and looking at the whole project in a measured way.

There is time to do this in the next several weeks, once ideas submitted by those of us who live here can at least be noted and considered. Please take some notice of the residents and council tax payers.

See also point 2 in my opening remarks on page 1 of this response.

Question Eleven

Scope and content of the proposed masterplan?

- a) The scope is sketchy regarding what is meant by 'employment' – you need to have a clear idea on what type of business you seek to attract to Tiverton to get the build and infrastructure right. There is a lot of competition out there in this fragile economy.

- b) There is no indication on how this whole development is to be financed – other than DCC money for the huge new roundabout and an unclear idea about burning waste in a big plant close to schools, houses and employment offices. How attractive is this?
- c) Whatever happened to the idea that the A361 was to form the northern boundary of the town? Take a look at your big roundabout in Option 1.
- d) The people of Tiverton are offered a forced choice between two incomplete and indeed embryonic options in this options document. I suggest that you return to the table, read all the ideas submitted, establish some realistic costings, review the implications and costs of different stages of the project, outline a realistic timescale and produce a second document of substance where proposals are phased and costed and include the necessary infrastructure plans.

Question Twelve

Other comments

Please see my observations and comments on page 1 of this response.

Question Thirteen

I am a member of the public.

Question fourteen

I live in the Post Hill area.

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