

## **Tiverton Civic Society Representation to Hartnoll Inquiry. September, 2023**

I am Chairman of Tiverton Civic Society, I was also a member of the Steering Group who wrote the recently adopted Tiverton Neighbourhood Plan, and I, together with County Councillor Des Hannon, created the Hartnoll Action Group, which was formed in 2006 to oppose an application by the present landowner for a massive development of over 10,000 square metres of employment land east of the present Hartnoll Business Park. Tiverton Civic Society also has very close links to Devon CPRE, Mike Sanderson, one of our committee, who also signed our objection letters, being the leader of Mid Devon CPRE as well as also being a Tiverton Neighbour Plan Steering Group

All these groups have one thing in common, which is a very strong determination to respect and maintain the existing urban boundary, to prevent further urban sprawl or ribbon development to the east of the town, and to prevent coalescence with the village of Halberton. We also aim to preserve green spaces, to protect wildlife habitats, and to maintain valued views into and outwards from the town and its established boundaries.

At the same time, we support new development which meets planned targets on sustainable sites and, apart from windfalls, is situated on allocated land within the urban boundary with the proviso that it should be well-designed, have good infrastructure, and have easy access to facilities. We emphasise that all new developments should conform to national policies, local plans, master plans where they exist, and to design guides. We are also very aware that there is an enormous local need for affordable, social rented and First Housing, and we consider that these should be included in all new developments. We also believe that local people and communities should be consulted at all stages of the development process, with full public consultations, and representatives given the opportunity to participate in UDAP meetings.

We believe that the present application is opportunistic, that it satisfies none of these requirements, and that the housing, in particular, would be in an unsustainable location. The Hartnoll Business Centre website advertises one of the main advantages of locating there as its setting '*in a relaxing scenic farmland and by the Grand Western Country Park*' (Welden Edwards); the Waddeton Park website, on the other hand, states that 154 acres will be developed at Hartnoll Farm, which their map shows would extend right up to

the Grand Western Canal with 1100 new homes. We maintain that the application site is in a highly attractive landscape, not in an area of Moderate Quality stated in the application, and that Waddeton Park's unwanted and unwelcome ambitions would destroy much that is highly valued in the town, and in the parish of Halberton.

We consider the application to have been very poor because it was not in accordance with many policies in the local plan, community engagement was inadequate, many key elements were lacking, and, in the case of the EIA, most of the requirements of the Planning Officer were ignored. We are surprised that it was validated. It was obvious, however, that the main objective of this rushed application was to achieve a refusal so that an appeal could be launched.

I was a Housemaster at Blundell's School for many years, and then as now, we fully acknowledged the need for new housing and job creation, but we were also highly concerned about the problems which would occur if the development in the TEUE was not carefully managed. Unregulated applications such as this, which are not in the Local Plan, would, if approved, lead to a further build-up of traffic congestion and potentially poor air quality through the middle of the large campus with over 600 children. Much has been written in the media about the impact of busy roads on children's physical and mental health, and, and, although Mid Devon District Council monitor the situation regularly many experts agree that there is no safe level of exposure to air pollution.

It was announced in July that, there being insufficient funds for the second stage A361 junction, it was being shelved for the foreseeable future. This is surely a game changer, the trigger point in the Masterplan of the construction of 1,030 houses before the full junction is constructed would soon be reached, Area B would not be developed, and the planned local centre would not be fully built. In addition, a new school is unlikely to be viable, especially when there are unfilled places in other schools in the town. This dearth of essential services would lead to further loss of sustainability for new housing at the application site and, potentially, lead to an increase in such problems as social isolation, a core objective in the development plan being to achieve sustainable communities.