PAPER 2

TDC planning department has repeatedly failed to represent the wishes of the people of Ide. Here are some examples:

**Park and Ride**

The department went against the policy of Ide PC, our County Councillor, both local Teignbridge District councillors and the wishes of the people of Ide as expressed in the village’s first ever referendum by supporting the Park and Ride application at Round Field. Many other organisations, including the Highways England and Devon Wildlife Trust had severe doubts and/or lodged objections after poring over the application with a fine toothcomb. TDC deliberately failed to vet the application properly as they have a vested interest in its success.

Ide Campaign Group made a formal complaint about the obfuscatory behaviour of TDC Planning Officer Rosalyn Eastman. Here are some extracts from our letter to the Teignbridge Chief Executive:

*“We maintain that TDC failed to act properly on our behalf and thus did not represent its own tax payers, failed to fully investigate the implications of such a scheme for thousands of Teignbridge commuters, and that the report’s author, Rosalyn Eastman, Principal Planner (Major Projects), failed to declare a conflict of interest.”*

Ms Eastman lays out her stall in her response to the Park and Ride application:

*“there is a strong strategic need for the proposal which forms part of the overall transport package for South West Exeter, and indeed, for the wider Exeter area, mitigating the congestion and other impacts of traffic growth with the city.”*

Firstly, this scheme was not designed to (and never would) reduce congestion. This was confirmed by DCC and Jacobs consultancy (*which wrote the application*). Ms Eastman’s claim is false.

Secondly, Ms Eastman is the lead officer on the SW Exeter growth initiative. A Park & Ride site was deemed integral to further housebuilding in Alphington. She therefore has a vested interest, as lead officer for growth, in the Park & Ride site going ahead. This is a clear conflict of interest which she failed to declare.

In addition, Ms Eastman pays lip service to ‘investigating’ other aspects of the scheme, whilst failing to make any investigations at all. For example, she is ‘content’ to leave any matters regarding ecology or biodiversity to DCC experts. The same applies to highway safety. She also has no concerns about flooding, even though dangerous surface water is a recurrent problem on the C50 and some householders in Ide cannot get insurance because of past flooding. Ms Eastman dismissed the land in question as “not an area of high landscape value” even though it lies within an official Area of Great Landscape Value and is one of the few remaining green sites between Ide and the city of Exeter.

Ms Eastman also claims that the negative impacts of the proposal submitted would only affect the small number of people who live in the parish of Ide (2,200):

*“The Teignbridge response…had to balance district-wide strategic consideration against the more limited local impacts”.*

The impact of this scheme is neither limited nor local. Increased congestion at the A30/A377, dangerous tailback congestion and recurrent surface water along the C50 are a district wide strategic consideration when thousands of Teignbridge residents use this junction – many of them on a daily basis; it is a major gateway into Exeter.

The formal complaint was, naturally, rejected by TDC; as they were investigating themselves the outcome was never in doubt. We then made a formal complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, Dr Jane Martin. Her department examined our evidence but concluded that because the Park and Ride application had been withdrawn by DCC (albeit temporarily) they could not justify using public money to take our case up because no one had been personally disadvantaged.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

In pursuance of their avowed policy to foist a Park and Ride on Ide residents, TDC have now stated that the scheme remains in their plans. Indeed, they have set aside taxpayers’ money for the very purpose of bringing it to fruition. This means, as we warned, that there will be a revised application from DCC before long.

This is why TDC rejected the Neighbourhood Plan. They know that if Round Field is included as an Open Green Space it will make the P & R scheme much more difficult to push through. This makes a mockery of the Government’s policy of giving power to parish councils to devise their own Neighbourhood Plans and thus bring decision making closer to communities.

**Planning application for agricultural dwelling off Polehouse Lane**

The reaction to this application sums up the TDC modus operandi. A part-time planning officer with no specialist knowledge hands over the entire responsibility for assessing the application to an outside agricultural consultant who turns out to be a former local authority employee. He sees no problem with the application (incompetence or gullibility or both) and recommends approval. We then commissioned a detailed report from our own agricultural consultant (Peter Skinner) which demolished the official version line by line. It was this that persuaded TDC planning committee to turn down the application.

**Planning Committee**

At the meeting to consider the above application the senior officer present argued strongly in favour of approval, even after a motion to reject it had been proposed and seconded. He clearly wanted to save face and made great play of the “usual practice” being to accept the findings of reports they had commissioned themselves. Even worse, the committee chair then called on a councillor at the back of the room, a clear abuse of procedure, and asked what he thought of the application. This man, who was not identified and had no official role as he was not a committee member, strenuously supported the application.

**Agricultural building at Rollsbridge Farm**

This application was approved in 2016. Various rules and regulations were broken including dumping builders’ rubble without permission. TDC decided not to take any action and now the applicant has put in a new application. The building will now be much higher, contrary to the original conditions, and much nearer to the C50. This will no doubt provide an opportunity in the future for an application for change of use. We have submitted a separate paper to Ide PC Planning Committee urging them to oppose this application.

**Conclusion**

TDC planning department is not fit for purpose and cannot be trusted to represent our wishes.

The council’s mission statement says its intention is to be:

**Honest, supportive, loyal, accountable, open, fair, communicative, listening, thorough, informative and responsible.**

Not one of those adjectives has been demonstrated in their dealings with us.

We urge Ide PC to be extremely careful in all its communications and meetings with TDC as its officers clearly have a quite different agenda to our own.

We all want to preserve our way of life for future generations. This is becoming increasingly difficult as the Government consistently ‘relaxes’ planning requirements. The result is that many applications are a shoo-in. Now there are new proposals to build on much of the Green Belt.

We would like to be reassured that Ide PC will remain truly independent, vigilant regarding planning applications, and not be swayed by TDC sub regional plans for South West Exeter.

Peter Hayes

Ide Campaign Group