

CAPS OFFICER

Letter of Representation - 16/0669/MOUT

TO: PLANNING CENTRAL, EDDC
THE KNOWLE, SIDMOUTH



Mr Sherlock - 21/09/2016

PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 22,000SQM OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AT LAND ADJACENT TO TWO BRIDGES, TWO BRIDGES ROAD, SIDFORD. PLANNING APPLICATION NO: 16/0669/MOUT.

I/We wish to object to the above Planning Application for the following reasons:

1. AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY should be given the highest level of protection equivalent to that of National Parks and should not be developed unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is in the public interest.(Paras 109,115,116 NPPF).
There are no exceptional circumstances.

The Development is expected to provide up to 300 jobs. However Sidmouth does not have an unemployment problem. Statistics published by DCC on its website show that Sidmouth and the area has low unemployment (43 people claiming unemployment benefit in Sidmouth in April, 2016. The facts speak for themselves and the Application should be withdrawn on this basis alone. If it is pursued it will simply draw in jobseekers from elsewhere in E Devon together with associated traffic which is contrary to EDDCs own stated policy which is to provide jobs close to home in order to cut down the impact of traffic. This industrial site is overkill and it is totally unnecessary to spoil the quality of life for hundreds of people in order to increase the profits of one or two business men.

The proposed site is Grade 2 agricultural land which is a diminishing resource nationally. With a projected burgeoning population it doesn't make sense to give this land up for something so obviously unnecessary and destructive. As a country we should be preserving agricultural land against future requirements and not just giving it over to support unnecessary development. There is ample provision for employment land in Sidmouth at the Alexandria Road Site and elsewhere in E Devon at the Heath Park Industrial Estate in Honiton, Cranbrook and more hectares planned for Honiton.

2. FLOODING is already a problem on the proposed Site at Sidford. The Site was flooded 4 times in 2012 incurring road closure both in Sidford and Sidbury (also flooded) causing misery to residents and motorists. Any attenuation schemes proposed by the Developer may be insufficient to deal with the problem and could make matters worse as natural soakaways are concreted over. Sidmouth as well as Sidford and Sidbury could bear the brunt of this.
Development should not take place on a flood plain unless there is no alternative and a stringent set of tests can be passed.(Paras 100-101 NPPF).

3. TRAFFIC implications are unacceptable. The access road to and from the Site the A375 is totally unsuitable for additional traffic. This is a narrow, winding lane with barely room for 2 vehicles to pass in places and particularly in School Street, Sidford, where 2 large vehicles trying to pass each other at Sidford Cross cause problems for other motorists. HGVs are known to mount the narrow pavements at times in order to pass a bus or another heavy vehicle. This causes a hazard for pedestrians. Brook Lane and Frys Lane are already used as 'rat runs' as motorists try to avoid congestion at Sidford Cross. Additional traffic will make the lives of residents there impossible.

In Sidbury Conservation Village there is limited paving and most times pedestrians have to walk in the road. North of Sidbury there is a Listed Bridge (Cotford) where traffic is single lane. Increased use by heavy vehicles could cause damage to this historic bridge. Single lane traffic is predominant throughout the Village as parking is largely on the main road .

Sidbury Hill (winding with blind bends) has been the scene of fatal and serious accidents. There is a primary school in the centre of the Village on the opposite side of the road to the car park with a lack of paving one side. There are obvious safety implications for young children here with any increase in the traffic as they try to cross the road in heavy traffic with cars parked on one side of the road obscuring their vision of oncoming vehicles. Bottlenecks can occur in the Village centre, at Sidbury Mill, Burnt Oak, Cotford Bridge, and will increase.

Emergency Services may be impeded in Sidbury, Sidford and Sidmouth. EDLP POLICY 47 - Adequacy of road network and Site Access states that "Planning permission for new development will not be granted if the proposed access, or the traffic generated by the development, would be detrimental to the safe and satisfactory operation of the local, or wider, highway network".

There is a requirement under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 of all local authorities to review their conservation areas and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. At the last Interim Conservation Area Reviews (on-line) it was noted that traffic blight had increased in the Villages of Sidbury and Sidford over the years. Presumably EDDC do not take their Conservation responsibilities seriously or they would not be considering plans which will increase this blight by significantly increasing the amount of traffic on the A375. Sidbury and Sidford are situated in historic landscapes which should be preserved as part of their Conservation. A Conservation Area Review for Sidbury is long overdue. **The last was in 2009.**

4. TOURISM is the main industry of Sidmouth. Thousands of tourists are attracted to the area every year because of the charming Regency town, its unique character and beautiful landscape. Tourists who come to Sidmouth do not come for employment parks and warehouse units, they are attracted by the small shops in Sidmouth which sell quality products and give friendly service. They want to relax in beautiful countryside and go for pleasant walks. Small seaside towns should not be forced into becoming mini Bournemouths, Eastbournes or Brightons - by the sea but urbanised. This is not what the majority of people in Sidmouth and the surrounding area want and they have said so in large numbers. Creeping urbanisation will deter tourists from coming to the area and this would have a big effect on the economy of Sidmouth. Putting an employment site in the centre of the Sid Valley does not seem like a particularly good idea in a tourist area renowned for its special character of Town and country in a River Valley setting which tourists come back to time and again because of its special ambience.

The proposal would lead to further encroachment along the Sid Valley and string development destroying the historic Green Wedge between Sidford and Sidbury. It would have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape, the natural environment and on wildlife along the environs of the River Sid. (Contrary to the intentions of paras 115/116 of the NPPF.). The Site would be visible from all major vantage points from the surrounding hills and particularly visible would be the 300 cars parked on the site with the light bouncing off their roofs which would completely destroy the magnificent views enjoyed by tourists. Trow Hill provides views of the Valley from the A3052 as tourists approach Sidmouth. The Sweetcombe Walk from Sidbury Car Park encourages walkers to enjoy wonderful views of the Valley towards the sea from the the viewpoint on the Ridge. This walk is well used by tourists and children from schools in Exeter and hiking clubs.

There would be light pollution from the site which would severely affect the Norman Lockyear Observatory (104 years old). It would probably close down as it loses its clear skies. The Observatory is of great scientific interest and an asset to the Town of Sidmouth. There are several species of bats on the site which have protection under EU Law. If they are disturbed they will leave their breeding grounds and this would be a criminal offence.


Peter Brett Associates in their Environment Statement say "the scale of development probably would have an adverse and direct long term effect of severe significance on the Site itself"

They couldn't have said truer words!

CONCLUSIONS:

The proposed employment site will benefit no-one except the Developers. It will destroy an historic Valley and two Conservation Villages with traffic impact and damage to the environment and result in a loss in quality of life for the people who live there. It will be of detriment to the whole Sidmouth area. The proposal is clearly NOT sustainable and is unwanted and inappropriate in an AONB.

EDLP Strategy 46 states "that development must conserve and enhance the landscape and character of the area, not undermine the landscape quality and be appropriate to the economic, social, and well being of the area."

Signed.....

ADDRESS: 1 CLAYLANDS VILLAGE
HORNITON DEVON
EX14 2WE