

Report Cllr Jess Bailey
Devon County Councillor – Otter Valley
East Devon District Councillor – West Hill and Aylesbeare
1st December 2024

Tipton St John School

Devon County Council has applied to EDDC for £600,000 from EDDC's s106/CIL to fund feasibility work on sites for a new school within Tipton St John. The timescale for EDDC's decision making is not yet confirmed but it is likely to take place in early January 2025.

At EDDC's strategic planning committee meeting on 22nd November I robustly expressed my view that the proposed settlement boundary for Tipton John should be changed from what EDDC officers had proposed so as not include the site south of Otter Close. This land had been earmarked a few months back by the committee as a potential site for the new school. However, by including it *within* the settlement boundary there would then be a presumption in favour of housing development. This would mean it was likely to end up as housing, which would have directly contradicted the committee's intention of allocating it for a school. The assistant director for planning Ed Freeman agreed with me and eventually so did the committee and the site is now proposed to be outside the settlement boundary.

Land at Sidmouth Road, Ottery St Mary (ref 22/1973)

I was delighted that it was confirmed on Friday the application for 63 houses had been refused by the planning inspectorate at appeal. Having submitted an objection on the grounds of highway safety, particularly the proposed substandard pavement and junction at Tip Hill I would have liked to have seen the inspectorate cite road safety as a ground for refusal. Perhaps because EDDC planning committee did not include it as one of their grounds it was not assessed at the appeal stage. I, like many residents, was extremely disappointed that DCC had dropped their highways objection during the course of the planning process.

Well done to the town council, the campaign group and the many residents of Ottery who persuaded EDDC's planning committee to reject the application against officers recommendation of approval.

Submission on DCC's consultation on the Countrywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

I submitted the following consultation response in support of the Otter Trail for the consultation which expired on 30th November:

As the division member for the Otter Valley I have completed the online questionnaire which urges for the prioritisation of the Otter Trail.

I wish to add the following comments to explain why the Otter Trail should be placed in group of projects to be delivered in the short term rather than long term as is proposed.

1. The Otter Trail is included in the Ottery St Mary and West Hill joint neighbourhood plan. This plan has been the subject of a formal referendum and as such presents compelling evidence of community support. Community surveys are of course important evidence of community support but the inclusion in a formal planning document such as a

neighbourhood plan goes further. DCC should use inclusion of trails within neighbourhood plans as part of its benchmarking exercise when comparing trails.

2. The Otter Trail is to be included as a project specifically referenced in the emerging draft East Devon Local Plan. It is proposed to be contained in policy TR02 as one of the strategic cycle network schemes following my proposal at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 9th October 2024. It is really important that there is collaboration across the district and county authorities so that infrastructure priorities are aligned and can be progressed and funded. That the Otter Trail is to be included in the East Devon Local Plan should carry significant weight in DCC's evaluation of the respective trails.

3. DCC should take into account the fact that a detailed feasibility study was completed in 2014 by Sustrans which can provide a springboard for the project. DCC should drive this project forward, building momentum by selecting and progressing one of the seven sections of the route. This approach - selecting a section of the route to start with - was endorsed by Sustrans in 2014 but regrettably no progress has yet been made by DCC.

4. There has been substantial population growth within East Devon (far greater than any other Devon district as shown by the comparison of population figures in 2011 and 2021 census). This is as a result of significant housing development including the formation of the new town of Cranbrook. In addition there is to be a further new town (as yet unnamed) with in excess of 8000 dwellings between the A3052 and A30. The Otter Trail would offer current and future residents really important leisure opportunities close by. In addition this housing development may well result in significant levels of s106 and CIL funding opportunities and DCC should ensure that section(s) of the Otter Trail are project-ready so that they can benefit from funding opportunities as and when they open up.

5. The fact that the Otter Trail has a committed and long standing campaign group should carry significant weight in DCC's evaluation of the projects. I hope that DCC will work closely with the campaign group to deliver the first section of the Otter Trail.

For all these reasons DCC should view the Otter Trail extremely favourably and focus it's resources on delivering the first section.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Jess Bailey
Otter Valley Ward

Coleridge Bridge, Ottery St Mary

I recently met with representatives from the EA, MP Richard Foord and Ottery Town Council to discuss the reinstatement of this vitally important footbridge. Unfortunately, due to restrictions on DCC working in the river until June 2025 it looks unlikely that the bridge will be operational again until the summer of 2025. DCC have agreed to fund the substantial cost of the repairs following the collapse of the tree into the bridge in December 2023 and have been permitted to carry out some very limited temporary protection works by the EA in the form of rock bags around the pier which is suffering from serious erosion. I am concerned that further erosion this winter could put the bridge in jeopardy and should it fall into the river there would be huge financial and environmental consequences. In the meantime,

residents including students at the Kings School are forced to travel a far lengthier and more dangerous route to and from the centre of Ottery, which is really unsatisfactory.

Grit Bins

Communities urged by DCC to check grit bins

Over 3,500 grit bins are strategically placed for public use during severe weather. Towns and parishes should be encouraged to check grit bins before the winter season starts rather than during it. Once winter service starts the amount of resource that can be diverted to filling grit bins is limited.

Grit bins are an expensive asset in terms of maintenance. Where new requests for grit bins are received the preference initially will be to see if it is possible to re-site an existing bin if there is evidence to suggest it isn't being used. Please liaise with your Neighbourhood Highway Officer who will be able to investigate if this is an option.

Where there are no options to re-site existing bins, and we're content a new bin is justified then this needs to be funded through the local councillor budget (where locality budgets are not available then funding may need to come directly from the Parish or Town Council). The cost remains at £350 which covers the installation, filling and ongoing maintenance costs for the life of the grit bin.

Forms to request salt and update contact details can be [found on the self help section of our website](#). Snow Wardens can request access to the online training by emailing communityselfhelp@devon.gov.uk.

Otterton – Brick Cross

Following my recent site visit with our neighbourhood highways officer Tom Cox and representatives from the parish council I understand that the sign posts which we viewed (which were corroding at ground level) have now been replaced. Following that site visit I did, as requested, raise concerns with the neighbourhood highways officer for East Budleigh/Budleigh Salterton about the arrows marked on the road directing traffic to Otterton down the first arm at the Stone Cross. However, I have not yet had a response.

Timescale for the EDDC local plan regulation 19 consultation

The intention is for the draft local plan to go to regulation 19 consultation in January 2025, subject to it being approved at the strategic planning committee at the meeting on 11th December.

Settlement boundaries – EDDC local Plan

The proposed settlement boundary for West Hill has been highly contentious since it was first published with the regulation 18 consultation in December 2022. All the detailed work to establish the built up area boundary for villages in East Devon in the Villages Plan (2018) had been largely replicated for the local plan in the December 2022 consultation. However, for West Hill it had been radically changed and enlarged. This means that there would likely be far more peripheral development for West Hill which is probably already the most dispersed village in the whole of the district. This all seemed very strange, completely at odds with the principle of sustainable development (which is meant to reduce not increase car use) and also in conflict with numerous appeal decisions.

I had been pleased to see that EDDC officers had reflected on the boundary in the intervening two years and proposed that it should be substantially reduced so that although not identical to the villages plan, it was similar subject to including newly allocated sites. You can imagine my disappointment at the strategic planning committee meeting on 22nd November that there seemed to be a push from some members within the committee to go against the officers recommendations and go back to the large boundary. I robustly objected and luckily a majority of the committee agreed with the more constrained boundary.