

Councillor Geoff Pratt

Independent East Devon District Councillor Ottery St. Mary Ward

The Planning Application by Devon County Council (DCC) to relocate Tipton Primary School to Ottery St. Mary coupled with the building of 150 houses was heard by the EDDC Planning Committee on the 6th January 2021. The proposed development was located in the countryside outside of any built-up Area Boundary with no planning policy support for residential development in this location. The resulting harm created by the urban sprawl of 150 houses built in open countryside on a prominent site that could be viewed from many areas in and surrounding Ottery and the dangerous highway conditions that would arise in Cadhay Lane were also considered by the Committee to be relevant issues which outweighed any benefits contained in the application.

The Planning Authority held that the application was in breach of Strategies 7, Strategy 24 (Development at Ottery St Mary development in the Countryside), Strategy 46 (Landscape Conservation and Enhancement) and Policy D1 of the Local Plan and Policies NP 1 (Development in the Countryside) and NP25 (land Identified for Educational Uses in Ottery St Mary). I made the proposal to refuse the application which was seconded by Cllr Philip Skinner. The planning committee refused the application by 11 votes to 2 with 2 abstentions.

This decision opens the opportunity to reconsider either rebuilding on the existing school site or on an alternative site in or near the village. The flooding problem on the existing lower school site (caused by the Metcombe Brook) appears to have been grossly overstated. Since the Brook was repaired by the EA in 2017 there has been no flooding and the main issue remains the condition of the buildings which are in a poor state of repair, although there would still be two sites.

I pointed out to the committee the recent support given by DCC to Sidmouth and Sidbury primary schools both of which have been supported by Government funding.:-

Sidbury Primary School made a planning application in 2017, for a building extension to the school to include a class room, a cloakroom with toilets, an external play area with raised decking, a new ramp and a new hall store. The School is zoned as flood zone 3, where there is a high probability of flooding (similar to Tipton School). In this case the flooding risks largely emanate from the nearby River Sid. An Environment Agency (EA) assessment judged Sidbury Primary School to be 'one of the most at risk of flooding in Devon', but said it was not viable to relocate. Despite a high risk of flooding the plans were backed by the EA and the County Education Authority. **and its expansion was supported by Devon County Education Authority.** The Government funded the building works. EDDC planning approval was granted

Sidmouth Primary School in, a Press release dated 4th Dec 2020 described news that a multi-million pound new building for Sidmouth primary school had been approved to replace its 3 sites. The school's Manstone Avenue site, will be expanded and redeveloped over the next 18 months to provide a modern, purpose-built facility, enabling all of the school's youngest pupils to be taught in one place. The new school will be ready to open to its pupils for the start of the new school year in September 2022 to provide the children and families of the town with the first class facilities they deserve without the planned development, the 3 sites would require significant repairs and maintenance work. **Government Funding of £4.2 Million has been approved to meet the building costs. The school has been supported by Devon County Council.**

In a **Government PRESS RELEASE dated 29th June 2020** Schools across England are set for a ten-year rebuilding programme. Schools will benefit from substantial additional investment. Schools and colleges will also receive funding this year to refurbish buildings in order to continue raising standards across the country.

Investment will be **targeted at school buildings in the worst condition** with :-.

- Over £1bn to fund the first 50 projects of a new, ten-year school rebuilding programme, and construction on the first sites will begin from September 2021.
- £560m for repairs and £200m for upgrades to schools and Further Education colleges will be provided.

The DCC Planning Statement stated that DCC's limited land ownership in the immediate area of Tipton St John and other sites within the village were reviewed, but no information is provided to demonstrate what was reviewed and why the land was unsuitable. It has been stated in public that a site was identified in the Tipton St John area, but agreement could not be reached.

In my view DCC have a duty to establish what government funds may be available to finance a replacement school for Tipton St John preferably in Tipton before it makes any further planning application.

DCC should then revisit the site identified in Tipton St John and consult with the owner of the land to see whether an agreement can be reached to purchase the land.

The Village school plays a crucial role in the life of the village and would be sadly missed if it vacates the village

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