

HOLCOMBE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
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Mr A Watson
Chairman, Holcombe Residents Association
4 Windward Rise
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7 October 2011

Dear Tristan,

Comments on the Draft Dawlish Parish Neighbourhood Plan

I am writing on behalf of Holcombe Residents Association to comment on the draft Plan. The Association has over 320 members in the village.

The Association supports the need for a Neighbourhood Plan in light of the Government's proposed new planning framework. It is essential that a Plan is produced, and agreed by the majority of the people in the area, as without such a document there is a real danger of unwelcome and unplanned development by both planners and housing developers.

In general, the Association likes the vision set out in the current draft Plan which paints a picture of how Dawlish and the surrounding area might develop in the next twenty years. The specific aims mentioned on page three of the draft Plan appear to cover the main areas that will lead to regeneration, job creation and the promotion of tourism. We also support the need for additional housing development to meet the needs of both local people and to bring investment into the area to pay for the infrastructure improvements that will be required. In addition, we were pleased to see that the vision specifically recognises that Dawlish will be "an area with a high quality natural environment and protected important wildlife interests". This is key for local people and to encourage tourism. It is also consistent with the Residents Association's aims, as set out in our constitution, of protecting the local environment.

Turning to more specific issues, we feel the draft Plan should set out more clearly how the number of new homes proposed has been derived. The current proposals state that the population of Dawlish is forecast to grow by 3,000 over the next 20 years and that over 400 affordable homes are required. From the latter, the number of new open market homes has been extrapolated. It would be helpful to explain how these figures have been derived. We would certainly applaud the need for more affordable homes in the area but the number has to be justified.

One of our members has done his own research on household projections for the Dawlish area using official household statistics produced by local and central government. We have attached these calculations at Appendix 1 to this letter. As you can see, these projections come up with a significantly lower number of newer homes that would be required, in the region of 1,300 to 1,400, compared to 2,000 in the draft Plan.

A further source of additional housing that the draft Plan does not mention is making the most of the existing stock of housing and residential land that is not presently utilised. Cornwall County Council has a policy of ensuring that vacant properties should be renovated for local people and has used compulsory purchase orders in order to achieve this. We are aware in the Holcombe area that there are at least two properties (Leigh House and Holcombe Hall) and a failed development site (Gatehouse) that could be utilised to increase the number of homes within the village. We suspect there are other similar sites elsewhere within the Dawlish area.

One of the main consequences of additional homes is the need for infrastructure to support the development. In particular, we are concerned that insufficient thought has gone into the additional traffic problems that will arise from the significant number of homes proposed, wherever they are built. At the best of times, the A379 through Dawlish, Teignmouth and Starcross can be very congested and this will be exaggerated with the additional demands of two new supermarkets (Sainsbury's and Morrisons), an enlarged business park and new residents going about their daily life e.g. commuting, getting to school, shopping etc. On a more micro level, the draft Plan is also silent on the traffic implications of specific developments for example at Little Leigh and Southdowns Road. We feel that Devon County Council should be asked to engage in the process now so the traffic and road implications can be incorporated into the Plan at this stage.

A similar concern relates to the sewerage / drainage implications arising from the proposed developments. South West Water and the Environment Agency will have views on the specific sites selected for development and these should be taken into consideration at this early stage.

Turning to issues more locally, we have the following comments to make on two of the development sites mentioned in the draft Plan:

Little Leigh

We are not opposed to development at this site, indeed outline planning permission has already been obtained for a parcel of land within the village envelope. We do however disagree with the size of the development, especially as the proposals would appear to eat into land that is currently designated "Costal Preservation Area" and "An Area of Great Landscape Value". More specifically, we are extremely concerned that the village's infrastructure, in particular the local roads, would not cope with the additional traffic movement associated with 20 new homes. The entrance to Little Leigh is narrow, Holcombe Road at the junction with Fordens Lane / the village hall is extremely dangerous and tight, and Fordens Lane is also narrow and does not have a pavement for much of its length. In addition, the visibility turning out of Fordens Lane onto the A379 is almost non-existent looking in the Teignmouth direction and there have been fatalities here in recent years.

There are also significant concerns over whether the sewerage and drainage systems could cope with an additional 20 homes in this location. We understand that existing properties in the area have encountered such problems given there has been new development in this part of the village in recent years.

As a result, we feel that a significantly lower number of houses should be developed at Little Leigh. It is interesting to note that the present owners of this land intend to submit a planning application shortly for only four houses, presumably recognising the economics of this development and the wider infrastructure issues referred to above.

We feel that a combination of a small development at Little Leigh coupled with making better use of vacant property / land elsewhere in the village (see comments above relating to Leigh House, Holcombe Hall, and the Gatehouse development) could increase the housing stock in the village by more than 20 new homes but with less environmental impact and infrastructure implications.

It is fair to say that there are contrasting views from our members relating to the types of houses that should be built in the village. Many members feel that smaller properties, including affordable housing, should be developed as this would attract younger families to the village that would benefit the community. On the other hand, others point to the fact that there is little in the village for younger people to do and they would have to travel to either Dawlish or Teignmouth for schooling and recreational facilities.

Southdowns Road

One of the objectives of the Residents Association, set out in our constitution, is “To protect the green field sites around the village of Holcombe from development. This to include all areas which currently provide a buffer between the settlements of Teignmouth, Holcombe and Dawlish” Given our constitution, the Association is strongly opposed to the planned development behind Southdowns Road as it would be on a green field site that is clearly visible from the village. Our position about protecting the “buffer” has become more acute following the approval in principle of the housing development off New Road, Teignmouth which will erode the green space to the south west of the village. If such developments continue, we feel that Holcombe will lose its identity and character. We also note that this proposed development site is located in the Coastal Preservation Area and in an Area of Great Landscape Value, and is also prime farming land.

Furthermore, development here would also appear to contradict other parts of the draft Plan such as protecting curlew habitats (item 9.1 in the Plan), protecting strategic open breaks between Holcombe and Dawlish (item 9.5) and protecting ridgelines around Dawlish (item 9.6).

If development did go ahead on this land, we would also have concerns relating to traffic access and movement, and sewerage and drainage issues. On the former, 100 new homes would probably mean an additional 500 car movements a day from this side of Dawlish going mainly north eastward to get to the schools, business park, recreational activities and shops. This would put further strain on small roads coming out on to the A379 and on the centre of Dawlish itself. On drainage issues, we understand that there would be a significant problem given the location of local springs and the height of the water table in the Southdowns area. We believe that if these additional 100 houses are needed – see point above about the total number of houses that are needed in the next 20 years - then they are best located with the large development that is planned around the Secmaton area as the associated infrastructure is easier and cheaper to put in place.

Our final comment on the draft Plan relates to improvements in the South West Coastal Path (item 7.10 in the Plan). This is an important issue for both residents of Holcombe and tourists especially as the present path has to cross the A379 in two places around Windward Lane and Smugglers Lane. We have been pressing Devon County Council to address this issue for a number of years by providing a pavement and / or building a pedestrian refuge or crossing. We would hope that any developments in the village would have s106 agreements attached to them to provide finance to address this specific issue. It would be helpful to have this included in the Plan.

As stated at the outset, we generally support the draft Plan and with a few changes outlined above we would encourage our members to do likewise. We feel that more detail is essential and will have to be added at a later date to ensure the vision becomes a reality, and we would certainly be keen to be involved in this process.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Watson, Chairman - Holcombe Residents Association

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CC; Cllr H Clemens ,Cllr R Prowse, Cllr J Clatworthy,

Household Projections

You can forecast future household numbers either directly or by forecasting population change and then converting that to households. I have done both below for comparative purposes. The source data is from published national and local sources and is generally based on mid-census data (i.e from 2006/7). So the base data will inevitably be different if based on 2011 census figures but there shouldn't be significant differences in projections.

1. Based on household statistics:
 - a. Number of households in Dawlish (2009) = 6370 (Source = Devon County Council, Dawlish town mosaic profile 2009);
 - b. National projections for percentage change in households over 20years: England = c.21.7%; SW Region = c.22.3% (Source = Office National Statistics, national and regional trends). *Note: I haven't been able to find a specific figure for Dawlish; also there is a warning that sub-regional projections are inevitably less accurate.*
 - c. So, taking the higher of these two figures, the **extra homes required over 20 years would be $6370 \times 0.223 = 1420$**
2. Based on population statistics:
 - a. Dawlish 2006 population = 15,122 (Source: Devon County Council - Devon Town Population Projections – Dawlish – July 2007)
 - b. Dawlish 2021 projected population = 17,274; with 14.2% change over that period (Source: ibid)
 - c. These figures are based on the Chelmer Population Projection Model
 - d. If we just pro-rata these figures then estimated 2011 population = 15,839 and projected 2031 population would be 18709.
 - e. So **projected increase in population = 2870** (or 18.1%, which is significantly higher than the England national average of around 14% over the same period)
 - f. Average household size projection for England is falling from 2.3 in 2011 to 2.1 in 2031 (Source: Office National Statistics), so take an average of 2.2 over the 20 year period
 - g. So, **projected extra homes required = $2870 / 2.2 = 1305$**