

17/1640/FUL | Redevelopment of the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (eRADE) site to provide 147 new homes (C3), a care home and assisted living units (both C2), accommodation for a pre-school, access related works, provision of landscaping and open space and other associated works. | Exeter Royal Academy For Deaf Education 50 Topsham Road Exeter Devon EX2 4NF

11th December 2017

Exeter Cycling Campaign note the proposed development. We welcome that the internal street design is better than most new developments in Exeter at creating a low speed, attractive environment through layout, surfacing and landscaping. We also welcome that a lower level of car parking provision is proposed in light of the sustainable location and existing above average levels of walking and cycling in the area. However, we disagree with some of the assumptions made about connections to the local cycle network. It is clear that some off-site improvements in the immediate vicinity are needed to:

- safeguard existing pedestrian and cycle provision;
- provide improvements to allow for the increased demand from future occupants; and
- mitigate negative highway and air quality impacts of additional vehicle traffic arising from the development (noting location within the AQMA).

We provide specific comments and suggestions below.

Site Entrances

It is essential that priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists using the existing shared path along the south side of Topsham Road at junctions into the site. Drawings 162290_G_Rev A and 162290_G_04 show that full priority is not given. It is essential that the double STOP line for vehicles exiting the site is pulled back into the site so vehicles stop before the shared path, not on it. There are numerous ways of achieving side road priority, with differing levels of urban design quality. We encourage the applicant to consider a high quality solution. As a minimum, the junction design must match the pedestrian and cycle priority standards at the junction of Cumberland Way and entrance to Monkerton Farm development, submitted by Devon County Council under application 17/1226/FUL and currently awaiting determination. This would protect the existing shared path and allow for easy connection into any segregated route in future.

Connections to network

The applicant states at 5.4 of the TA that the site has “Excellent connections to the local cycling network’, and at 6.8 that there is no need for off-site investment in the walking and cycling network’. Exeter Cycling Campaign disagrees with these statements.

It is true that the site has good connections to the Exe Estuary Trail via Weirfield Road. It is also close to the city centre ‘as the crow flies’. However, there are significant barriers to walking and particularly cycling from the site to the city centre. The existing shared path along Topsham Road ends a short distance to the west of the site, where Topsham Road drops into a dip before rising steeply back up towards the Western Way roundabout and city centre. This section of the road has only narrow pavements either side. Cyclists are not permitted to cycle on these, and there is poor visibility on the carriageway, where vehicles often speed through the dip and bends. Topsham Road gets extremely busy along its full length, and there have been numerous collisions between cars and cyclists recorded over recent years. Most collisions and near misses are not reported, so the actual number is likely to be much higher than recorded numbers.

The proposed development will both increase demand for cycling – in an area where cycle commuting rates are already well above the national and Exeter average, as acknowledged in the TA – but also the volume of traffic on an already congested and often dangerous road. While the proposed development cannot solve all of the existing problems, it must improve facilities in the immediate vicinity of the site to provide adequate provision for future residents and to mitigate the negative effects of the increased traffic it will generate. Exeter Cycling Campaign suggest delivery of the following measures is necessary to ensure that the proposed development adequately mitigates its impact on the local network and promotes use of sustainable modes:

1. Replacement of the existing poorly located pedestrian crossing with a parallel Toucan crossing further along Topsham Road. This should be located just to the east of the existing Deaf Academy footbridge and aligned with the built out pavement at the junction with St Leonards Road. The crossing would serve both pedestrians and cyclists, but in particular would provide a safe crossing for residents to cycle to local shops and services on Magdalen Road and schools in St Leonards, and allow parents with tag along trailers to safely access the proposed pre-school on site from the north. No such facility for cyclists currently exists along this stretch of Topsham Road. It would also provide an alternative route to the city centre via St Leonards for less confident cyclists that bypasses the dangerous dipped section of Topsham Road to the west, and increase access to the Exe Estuary Trail from the north via the existing shared path on the south side of Topsham Road and then Weirfield Road. We note that a simple traffic island is currently proposed in this location. **This is unacceptable as it provides zero priority for pedestrians and cyclists and is wholly inadequate for the volume of traffic on Topsham Road and importance of providing safe and convenient connections for all modes to facilities to the north.**

2. Creation of full priority for pedestrians and cyclists over side roads between the site and Isca Academy to the east, enhancing the existing shared path and providing a safer route for children walking and cycling to school.

Future Strategic Routes

As a direct and arterial route into Exeter, Topsham Road should eventually provide a high quality cycle route into the city centre with segregation of cars, cyclists and pedestrians (akin to the E4 route currently under construction along Cumberland Way). The proposed development should be designed to tie into such a route at its junctions, but should also make an appropriate financial contribution to the delivery of such a route to mitigate its effect on the highway network.

Air Quality

Topsham Road is within the Exeter AQMA and is recognised as having poor air quality at peak times. As such, it seems appropriate that a higher level of sustainable transport contribution should be sought to mitigate the proposed development's negative impact on air quality and ensure that the barriers to car-free travel outlined above are overcome.

Yours sincerely

Caspar Hughes

for and on behalf of:

EXETER CYCLING CAMPAIGN

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Figure A: Existing pedestrian crossing (Blue) should be removed and replaced with a new Toucan crossing for pedestrians and cyclists close to the junction with St Leonards Road (Red). This would provide a safe pedestrian and cycle crossing on the desire line to shops and services to the north, the pre-school on site, and an alternative cycle route to the city centre via St Leonards and Exe Estuary Trail via Weirfield Road.



Figure B: The shared path along Topsham Road ends to the west of the site. Pavements are narrow with cycling prohibited. Cars speed down the dip and around the corner, creating a dangerous and unappealing environment for people cycling. Unsafe driving is common due to the lack of space for safe overtaking of cyclists by larger vehicles, particularly on the uphill sections. This is a major barrier to cycling from the site to the city centre, particularly for less confident cyclists. In the absence of a segregated route, alternative cycle access via St Leonards must be facilitated.

