

SHF response to the TDC 20-year Core Strategy plan.

The Seale-Hayne Future Group spent nearly eight years from 2002 arguing that the Grade II listed former Agricultural College buildings, along with 450 acres of its productive farmland should remain in use for education and food production. The Group was delighted with the acquisition of the buildings by the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust to further its magnificent work in training disadvantaged young adults. It was also delighted with the fact that a local farmer acquired the Seale-Hayne land to farm it and to produce food.

SHF has worked closely with Hannahs in establishing a hugely important local community resource at Seale-Hayne, with all the local employment and revitalisation that goes with it. The group accepted that limited commercial development of maybe up to 200 houses could be necessary to help finance the refurbishment of the historic buildings so sadly neglected by the former owners. The group also understood that the outline plans to enable the growth of Hannahs and also the plans for the limited housing development had been favourably received by Teignbridge District Council, and were actually progressing through the early stages of the planning process.

In November 2011, TDC released its 20-year Core Strategy Plan covering the region's development strategy until the year 2033. And it seems that without any consultation or notification to Hannahs, or to the farmer who now owns the land, the bulk of Seale-Hayne's estate was earmarked for development within the Houghton Barton "*vision*" of the Council's Strategic Plan. This plan is in its 'consultation' phase right now.

TDC's "*vision*" for this particular part of Teignbridge is for "*concentrated growth*", with some 2500 new houses to be built, most of them on the green fields that are currently producing food. A huge primary school, new shops and a leisure centre are also proposed and of course, a new road to make it all possible.

If such development is encouraged by TDC, Hannahs will lose the surrounding farmland and the partnership with the farm, both of which are already proving hugely beneficial in its work with the most disadvantaged in our community. These were the factors that convinced them to move to Seale-Hayne in the first place. The farmer will also lose his most productive fields along with his plans for expansion that have, unbelievably, just been approved by the same council.

Both Hannahs and the farmer confirm that they would probably leave the area if this current Strategic Plan were approved.

The TDC proposal reads like a submission from a first year surveying student trying to tick all the boxes to win favour with his tutor.

One of the ticks is for consultation. The document states (S5 – Infrastructure) that: "*We have already begun to work alongside communities and neighbourhoods to identify their community and cultural infrastructure needs and priorities and will continue to do so.*" Really? So how is it that neither Hannahs, nor the farmer, knew anything about the Strategic Plan until they read about it in the newspaper?

The document also states (S6 – Resilience) that: "*encouragement will be given to the provision of employment, facilities, services, food production and goods within*

communities". Maybe an establishment like Hannahs does not count as employment? And an expanding farm business doesn't count as either food production or employment?

Councillors themselves are already questioning some of the statistics used in the report. For instance, the government's own 'Regional Spatial Strategy' in 2007 did indeed identify a need for some 4000 new homes in Newton Abbot. But the TDC Strategic Plan for some reason wants 6000, an increase of 50%, equating to 13,200 extra people just in the town. If we look at the **whole of Teignbridge** however, the 'Office of National Statistics' seems to think that the population will increase by a total of just 20,000 people in the next 20 years. Is TDC suggesting that we house 66% of the whole region's extra people solely in Newton Abbot?

This Strategic Plan seems to be based partly on net inward migration figures drawn from between 2000 and 2005, when there was money about and people actually were buying southwest property. But the ONS says that inward migration to Teignbridge has fallen by over 30% since then.

And in 2005, a report by Stride Treglown **could not** identify a need for any more office or industrial accommodation around Newton Abbot. The whole world has been in severe recession since then but apparently not Teignbridge! The Strategic Plan seems to identify a definite need for "*land for business, industry and warehousing*". About 80 hectares of it in fact, and 60% of it allocated to the Newton Abbot area.

The council seems to have its head in the sand. Our country is running out of land and green spaces fast. And land that produces food is especially at a premium - the whole world (apart from TDC it seems) knows this. A satellite view of our region shows acre upon acre of "brown-field" land in Teignbridge, a lot of it close to excellent road links and other services and much of it within a stone's throw of the Houghton Barton "vision".

If the council approves this Strategic Plan in March, it will provide open season for developers to build on the most productive and beautiful land around Newton Abbot. And at the same time we would lose the badly needed long-term employment offered by an expanding farm and an educational establishment such as Hannahs, now at Seale-Hayne, which incidentally celebrates its centenary this year.

So why does TDC want to butcher this part of Devon by picking on the green bits? Seale-Hayne Future Group welcomes development, especially if it enables regeneration of one of the region's historic buildings and develops new business and employment. But blanket carpeting of houses, concrete and tarmac over green fields? – NO, THANK YOU. Please use up the already ruined "brown-field" land first.

Letters of objection really do count in these considerations. We urge everyone to get in touch with Teignbridge District Council before March 2nd and make their views known, before the plan is finalised later in March. <http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=15096>

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