

## **Planning Appeal 2161479 24 Jan 2012 Land at Courtlands Cross**

### **Statement by Mark Robertson on behalf of the residents of Courtlands Lane and other users of the local amenity provided by the fields.**

My property backs on to the proposed development. I'm here to represent the views of the wide range of people who currently benefit from the community amenity provided by the fields.

I'm aware that we could face accusations of nimbyism. I'm not a nimby. My family has lived in Courtlands Lane for 10 years and during that time we've seen our share of development, but it's been development that has been sympathetic to the local environment not just parachuted into the middle of our green wedge. If these fields are built upon a significant community amenity will be lost, not just to us, but to future generations. Forever.

The appellant attempts to make a case for this development as being good for local people. They promise to build social housing on the site. I'm as aware as you are of the need of such housing in East Devon. For 3 years I was a trustee of a local housing charity helping local people with housing problems. When our funding was threatened we didn't see big developers like the appellant coming forward with donations to keep our work going.

At one of our many local meetings to discuss the implications of the development I got talking to a young woman. She lives in Exmouth, was born and bred in Lymphstone Village and told me how desperate she is to move back, but can't afford the cost of a house. 'Surely I asked her, you must support the development because it includes social housing'. But she looked sad and she shook her head. 'What would be the point' she said 'of moving back if the character of the village is destroyed by this development'.

This development is not about the needs of local people it is about a small number of greedy people looking to make a quick buck.

I'm speaking to you today in the spirit of community empowerment enshrined in the Localism Act, the Big Society, bringing the voice of people who don't have the time and money to produce big fat glossy proposals like this into this Inquiry. 'This Government trusts people to take charge of their lives and we will push power downwards and outwards to the lowest possible level' (Localism Act 2011). What does that actually mean?

To paraphrase the Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill 'For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances. And it leaves people feeling 'done to' and imposed upon - the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives'.

I don't want the people I am speaking for to feel like that. No-one who lives in Courtlands Lane voted for Strategic Land Partnerships. No-one who lives in Courtlands Lane has been consulted by the appellant.

You will have some awareness of the strength of local opposition to this development having read the 650 letters of objection. I've been talking to many of the 60+ families who live in Courtlands

Lane, some of the thousands of people who walk the East Devon Way every year, the horse riders who use the local livery stables and the local dog walkers who use the fields on a regular basis

So what do these local people, who value this community amenity, want me to say to you? Well they want me to ask you to come to Courtlands Lane. Drive down the road from Exmouth, and maybe just go on a bit to the Lymptone Traffic lights – that will help you realise the threat to the coalescence of Lymptone with Exmouth this development poses. Then walk down the lane and across the fields. Notice the stunning views over the estuary and remember walkers here are coming to the end of the EDW. How different if they were walking through a housing estate.

You might also notice how the appellant has altered the historic nature of the land, ploughing it up so that we've currently got sludgy fields where lambs and cattle used to be and planting many non-deciduous trees that are not compatible with this landscape.

Talk to the local people you meet exercising their dogs or using the fields as a short cut to the village and learn how unique this environment is in this locality.

After half a mile or so of exhilarating countryside you will reach the road at Sowden. Turn back up our Lane and see the character of the existing settlements. See how these will be swamped by the proposed development. Walk up the lane and ask any local residents, runners, and horse riders what they think of the increased traffic the estate would bring. Not just when it's built – how long will the construction phase be – and can we really believe the builders will access the site from the A376?

And as you finish your walk and drive back to Exmouth please ask yourself how in your judgement you will balance the strength of local opposition to this development with the appellants arrogance, ignorance, and greed\*.

\*Arrogance, Ignorance and Greed is the title of a recent song by local band 'Show of Hands'. The lyrics of their songs have some relevance to the issues under consideration at this Inquiry.

**Mark Robertson 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012.**