

## Yealmpton Parish Council response to the current Sherford consultation

### **Sherford Planning application - is it off the rails?**

The Sherford project was conceived way back in 1999 when John Prescott MP conceived a 'regional' Great Britain. He concluded that mass building was required in his new regions to meet the demands of the growing population and the needs of a flourishing economic society.

This was translated into a local vision for a new community at Sherford ... 'to create a quality, sustainable development with a vibrant, balanced community, where people choose to live, work and spend their leisure time'.

The vision was said to incorporate:

1. a sustainable development delivering an excellent quality of life, within a well designed high quality environment
2. a strong and healthy community
3. a high quality new community, with good locally distinctive design
4. a mixed use development - prioritising affordable homes, local job opportunities and a full range of community facilities from the outset
5. a high quality, high capacity public transport system from the outset
6. clean, attractive, high quality public spaces throughout the development - including a large scale community park forming the eastern boundary
7. a response to the challenges of 'climate change' and the need for sustainable development and maximising the opportunities for sustainable lifestyles
8. development which meets the housing needs of the Plymouth sub-region, that cannot be accommodated within the city boundary, and the needs generated from within the South Hams.

Twelve years later, the economies of Great Britain and Europe, and indeed the world, have changed very significantly since those halcyon days but the current planning application from Redtree is still based on what can now be seen as an imaginary vision and false assumptions.

The eight items listed above are typical of the wordsmith whose trade is to impress with flowery words and meaningless expressions and we now need to explore the real needs for Sherford today and how unrealistic those goals are today.

1. **Improved quality of life will not be achieved** because it is not made of bricks and mortar. The economy is in such a desperate state that the project is no longer viable in its original concept and the developer has had to radically change all the basic parameters.
2. **A strong and healthy community is not achievable in today's economic climate..** Since the developer is no longer able to provide the promised 'High speed travel link over Laira Bridge and the necessary work at Deep Lane junction' homes should not be built so far from potential residents' workplaces (if they have one).
3. **A high quality new community** probably meant high quality buildings rather than a community! If the developer is seeking to make any profit, the quality of design and build will no doubt become as diluted as the affordable housing allocations and the general reduction in all other 106 figures.
4. **Affordable homes are not now prioritised**, they are just an embarrassment to the developer who has reduced the previously agreed 50% to a totally unacceptable 15%.

Clearly the time is not right for the developer to proceed. There will be no job opportunities at Sherford for the foreseeable future and the industrial unit allocation has been put to the back of the development. There will be no community facilities from the outset. The revised programme pushes the promised infrastructure into the mists of time; there will not even be a main street for years to come.

5. **The high quality, high capacity public transport system has been lost..** It has been scrapped by DCC and PCC so journey times over Laira Bridge will increase every year.
6. **There may be no clean, attractive, high quality public spaces.** The land should be more usefully used for agricultural production to feed the nation and reduce food imports and to provide sustainable jobs on the farms..
7. **Building houses where they are not required does not respond to the alleged ‘climate change’ challenge.** Sustainable development is already taking place within Plymouth City boundary and in the South Hams villages based on the agreed Local Development Framework (LDF).
8. **Housing needs in the greater Plymouth area are reducing year-on-year.** Factories are closing and jobs moving more to central England. The Naval presence in Plymouth has sadly reduced and will continue; the support services at Devonport are reducing in proportion; the airport has closed and, with fuel costs continuing to increase, more companies will move north towards their markets. This is not ‘doom and gloom’ but does require a pragmatic reassessment of the region’s housing needs.
  - a) Plymouth is building 1500 homes in the old quarry at Plymstock
  - b) The government wants brown field sites to be used before green field sites
  - c) The airport land, owned by Plymouth, will provide new housing developments
  - d) Plymouth Council have declared that they have adequate affordable housing within the city boundary
  - e) South Hams villages are already planning to build to the LDF proposals and will create more sustainable villages, village schools and local communities which are in constant danger of collapse as the average age profile increases in our area.

In conclusion, **there is no demand for Sherford.** It will become a white elephant, with maybe two legs and only half a trunk – a real blot on the landscape of our beautiful countryside.

The additional danger of this plan as presented today is that, if approved, it may well become a town full of people dependant on our facilities and without adding any contribution to our economy. It may become a smart place to retire with all the benefits of living in the South Hams with house prices far lower than those north of Somerset.

Can we afford a greater percentage of pensioners?  
Is that what South Hams councillors want to create ?

**Footnote for councillors:** SHDC officers tell us that Redtree may take legal actions if this unrealistic plan is not approved and that this might prove expensive. We are sure that you will agree that what is important is that the correct decision is taken without any consideration as to reprisals or court cases. We politely suggest that a small reduction in the high financial reserves of SHDC is a far better option both to Councillors and all South Hams residents than the creation of an unwanted, unneeded, unsustainable and very expensive Sherford ghost town.

For and on behalf of Yealmpton Parish Council  
M J Stickland, Clerk to the Council

November 7<sup>th</sup> 2011