

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER OF PUBLIC

UNDER STANDING ORDER NO.19

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY – 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

QUESTION FROM GILL WESTCOTT

I am writing on behalf of Transition Exeter Transport Group to ask whether we could bring some concerns before the Scrutiny Community Committee next Tuesday 3rd September. If possible someone will attend to ask a question, but in case this is not possible, we wished to

- a) congratulate Exeter City Council on measures to increase walking and cycling and improve public transport, and on the reduction in pollution levels at some location; We appreciate the commitment of time and finance this has taken.
- b) express concern about the continued increase in nitrous oxide at some of the main routes into town, including Heavitree Fore St and Cowick Street which are residential and shopping areas.
- c) ask how the impact of housing developments at Cranbrook, Newcourt, Monkerton and near Alphington on air quality can be more accurately assessed, and to what extent developers can contribute to improving sustainable and less polluting transport options.
- d) Similarly, with the IKEA development with 800 parking spaces, will efforts be made to minimise car journeys, support alternative travel possibilities, car clubs etc.?
- e) Would ECC consider insisting on a proportion of car-free developments at new development sites with viable sustainable transport options from the beginning ?

Answers

- a) *Thank you, we do try to encourage interest and participation in air quality issues by community, business and local interest groups, so your presence at the committee meeting, and your questions are welcome.*
- b) *The levels do not show a trend of significant and widespread increase and we do not therefore believe that air quality in Exeter is worsening. There are hotspots however where, as the report states, Government guideline levels for nitrogen dioxide are exceeded. These guidelines are set at a very precautionary level and so the actual impact on health is likely to be very small, but those with pre-existing respiratory problems could find that these are exacerbated in the vicinity of the very busiest roads. We are working with the Health and Wellbeing Board at DCC to understand the nature and extent of any health effects and what action could be appropriate as a result.*
- c) *The cumulative impact of the developments has been considered at the master planning stage and the individual impact of each planning application will also be assessed through the development control process. Any unacceptable air quality impacts would require mitigation by the developer.*

Developers are already required to contribute towards sustainable transport and highways works by DCC through S.106 agreements, or the new CIL. These contributions are welcomed by us, because the works which DCC will carry out using this money to alleviate congestion will also improve air quality. Although the large new areas of development have the potential to increase traffic congestion and air pollution, they will be a mechanism by which significant improvements in public transport infrastructure can be achieved. It is intended that these improvements will offset any worsening as a result of the developments. Because the new infrastructure will also be available to existing residents, the developments actually have the potential to improve on the current situation as well.

The development control requirements for sustainable transport infrastructure on development sites themselves are set out in the Sustainable Transport SPG, which is available on the website. For more information on this, please speak to Ross Hussey.

- d) Yes. The specifics of this application will be being handled by Richard and Lee, so I am not aware of them. It should be noted though that most of the traffic generated by the IKEA store will simply leave the motorway and travel straight to the site, so it will have limited impact on residential parts of Exeter.*
- e) This type of measure would be welcomed in air quality terms, however when making development control decisions, air quality considerations have to be balanced against all other issues. The current ECC policy is set out in the Sustainable Transport SPG.*

With regard to whether the Low Emission Strategy project was a good use of Council money, because it appears to be research rather than a solution it was DEFRA money not ours. Secondly, although it does involve a significant proportion of research, the intention of this is to develop evidence based policy solutions. The project is therefore an excellent thing to be doing!

28 August 2013