

Councillor John Tucker
Leader
South Hams District Council
Follaton House
Totnes.
TQ9 5NE.

12 July 2017

Dear Councillor Tucker,

Development Management Committee

The Newton and Noss Parish Council wishes to express its continuing dismay and dissatisfaction with the Development Management Committee (DMC), which we feel ignores local democracy.

This is not the first time we have written. The most recent concerned the committee's perverse decision to allow five new homes to be built on agricultural land at the end of the Fairway in Newton Ferrers, despite Council and local objections. By no stretch of the imagination did this enhance the AONB, in which these houses will now be built, contrary to the NPPF guidelines. The site is also outside the village planning boundary.

The latest failure to support local views is the approval given on July 5 for the redevelopment of the Yealm Hotel in Newton Ferrers. This is one of, if not the, most important sites identified in our Neighbourhood Plan, requiring the most vigilant protection of a unique setting and a non-designated heritage asset.

Your Committee failed spectacularly in this respect giving scant regard to the well argued objections from Newton and Noss Parish Council, our two district councillors, and a representative of some 500 villagers. The Parish fully supported and applauded the restoration of the old hotel. The contemporary box built within six metres was our main concern. This special environment deserves better.

This is yet another arrogant dismissal of local democracy. Strong evidence from a recent planning inspector's report clearly backed our objections, yet this was either summarily dismissed or blatantly ignored.



Newton
& Noss
Parish
Council



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Our experience with the planning process continues to be, to say the least, discouraging. We have had meetings with Malcolm Elliott, Cllr Steer and Cllr Fosse, when comforting words were uttered. Nothing changed.

As volunteers a lot of our time is taken up trying to marry the interests of parishioners and the sustainability of our villages, with the vagaries of interpreting the ever changing planning regulations. Our final defence against inappropriate development is the DMC. We consider we have been let down badly.

In our numerous encounters with the this Committee your chairman has not once questioned the documentation, challenged either side of the argument, or voted against a planning officer's recommendation. Knowing this before presenting a case to the Committee does not inspire confidence in a successful outcome.

More specifically, prior to approving the Yealm Hotel application, one of the Committee asked whether the fine detail of the hotel could be photographed to ensure proper and accurate preservation. Although preservation of the building was considered material in DMC approval no condition was made. This apparent negligence is beyond our comprehension.

The DMC appears more of a political forum rather than a debating chamber. The Parish voice should be heard on a neutral platform. Unlike an applicant, this is our last resort. We cannot appeal.

With failing confidence in the whole planning process we fear we are wasting our time and taxpayers' money. We make no apology for repeating our view that it appears that anything goes in terms of planning and local opinion counts for little or nothing. Localism has been cast aside in the self-interest of SHDC to fulfil government demands for a five-year land bank.

The DMC is not fit for purpose. It not only fails to protect our special places but also fails to support local opinion.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Alison Ansell

Chairman Newton & Noss Parish Council

CC Ms. Sophie Hoskin
Mr. Patrick Whymer,
Cllr. Keith Baldry,
Cllr. Ian Blackler,
Gary Streeter MP.