**Sutton Corner 65c Oxenturn Road Wye Kent TN25 5A**

David Prentis Esq, Planning Inspector 12th January 2021

By e-mail attachment

Dear Sir

**Objective**

I write this in the belief that there exists at your Inquiry the opportunity to preserve for public use into the future the unique heritage buildings at the heart of the former Wye College. This is a plea that you will enable continuing community access lost during the last fifteen years, but so widely enjoyed for many previous decades.

This is within your power because of what I believe to be recent planning failures. Had Ashford Borough Council (ABC) acted correctly, Telereal Trillium (TT) would not now be in a position to make its current appeal. The relevant application should have been deemed procedurally unacceptable when submitted.

I am told that TT is now promoting for sale the core WC site assuming the grant of planning permission for their scheme. It is therefore vital that the range of Grade l and ll\* listed buildings is safeguarded by you as a community asset. If TT succeed our way of life will be changed forever.

**My background**

As a villager I attended Wye primary school, opened a business in the village and was a Parish Councillor for 23 years. I did not attend the College but my father lectured there during four decades. I grew up using their sports facilities. In different capacities I have attended many functions in the heritage buildings at the heart of the College, indeed I have helped organise at least six functions in the Old Hall and the Refectory. Since the closure of the site I have been a founder member of Wye Future Group, created to oppose Imperial College’s scheme to greatly enlarge the village. I helped with the preparation of Wye’s Neighbourhood Plan (NP). I am also active within Wye College Regeneration Group (WyeCRAG).

**Telereal Trillium’s failure to follow guidance in the Neighbourhood Plan**

The Localism Act of 2011 encouraged communities to consult and prepare Neighbourhood Plans which would form part of local planning policy. Wye Parish Council (WPC) spawned a group which produced the Wye Neighbourhood Plan 2015-30 (the NP). Since this became adopted policy, the village felt reassured that whatever happened to Wye College, it could only happen within the provisos of the NP. This required a masterplan covering the academic buildings and the ADAS and Olantigh Rd sites after consultation - and by consensus between TT, the village and ABC.

TT’s introductory letter to residents announced

*“…..we committed to engaging with the village on the proposals we will be bringing forward. The proposals will be developed primarily through a masterplan, in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan….”*

Villagers were pleased to read this declaration of willingness to follow the rules, but Virgil urges us “beware the Greeks bearing gifts!”

In considering a masterplan, WPC was assured by ABC that the provisions of the NP would be respected and was encouraged to hold various community discussions, however communication with TT proved unsuccessful. Two exhibitions were held in WC by ABC at which all the material had been prepared by TT, ignoring the NP. After the first such meeting, in May 2017 I wrote to Richard Alderton (then Head of Planning at ABC) pointing out the abuse of process that was transpiring, but the second exhibition in September 2017 had the same defects. After attending that, I wrote to ABC’s Case Officer Mark Chaplin criticising their weakness and I quote the following extract -

*“…….the evolution of the masterplan is meant to be a collaborative process and TT pledged in writing at the outset that this would be their approach. The village’s representatives WPC were only advised of the content of the exhibition the evening before. Since this happened in much the same way as the previous exhibition and TT were then much criticised, it becomes apparent that TT have no intention of the underlying issues being discussed on a collaborative basis. It seems increasingly apparent that TT are approaching the matter on an adversarial basis”.*

Nothing changed and TT subsequently submitted the subject planning application, to which ABC’s proper reaction should have been to tell them not to submit any planning applications for any of the WYE 3 sites until a masterplan was agreed. It is, of course, that application (now subject of TT’s appeal on the grounds of non-determination), which has led to this Inquiry.

**In conclusion**

Wye feels let down by TT over these issues

* its failure to live up to their undertaking to consult with the village and agree a masterplan
* its ignoring the provisos of the NP
* its submission of piecemeal planning applications before any masterplan was agreed
* using its considerable experience to lead ABC into an abuse of process when they were under pressure

Wye College was once - and for centuries - the beating heart of our community. You have it in your power to return the heritage buildings at its centre to community use and I sincerely hope that you will be able to support that line of action.

There are, of course, other issues over housing numbers at ADAS and Occupation Road being pursued by WPC with the support of villagers which I have not addressed here.

Yours sincerely

Alan Paterson