

COMMENTS

RESPONSES

Ehsan, Beth

From: Daniel Kucharski <daniel.kucharski@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2015 8:25 PM
To: Sibbet, David; Ehsan, Beth; Loy, Maggie A; Blackson, Kristin; Wardlaw, Mark
Cc: Fitzpatrick, Lisa; Cox, Greg; Jacob, Dianne; Roberts, Dave; Ron-Roberts; Horn, Bill; bruce.bettyliska@gmail.com; douglas.dill@att.net; efhgtc@gmail.com
Subject: Our concerns about Valiano project

Dear PDS representatives,

First, let me thank you for the opportunities you provided to us to voice our concerns about the Valiano project draft, and for the transparent manner in which this review process is being conducted. We have attended the meetings, and have expressed our concerns before, but decided it was important to be on the record.

BF-1

My name is Daniel Kucharski, and together with my wife Joanna Kiljan we are Elfin Forest residents. We are writing this because of our concerns about Valiano project incompatibility with the character of our community, and the serious detrimental impact its new high-density variant will have on the enjoyment and value our community provides not only to its residents, but also numerous other stakeholders in San Diego County who frequently visit our community for recreational purposes. If the Valiano project is allowed to proceed, it will create a serious safety hazard.

When the subject of new development is discussed in Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove, equestrian issues are usually brought to the forefront. However, this is just one of many dimensions of the unique character of our community. Another important aspect is road cycling. Our community attracts literally hundreds of cyclist every week from all over San Diego County. This includes individual riders and small groups as well as organized club rides and charity events. Our area has rich cycling tradition. In fact, Tour of California—one of the largest professional cycling events in the US—sometimes passes through nearby Escondido, which further fuels participation in this already very popular sport. Community of Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove provides unique cycling experience, with its undulating terrain accompanied by spectacular views of hills, rocks formations, and the vegetation supported by Escondido Creek. The ride is uninterrupted by traffic lights and intersections, and it benefits from mild coastal weather, and often a perceptible ocean breeze. No other place in San Diego County provides this combination of desirable qualities to cyclists.

BF-2

Mountain bikers share our trails with equestrians and hikers under a well-defined set of trail conduct rules, but road cycling happens on the road, and this is where the problem lies. There is only one road connecting the new developments to western communities of San Elijo Hills, Carlsbad, and Encinitas. This road is Harmony Grove Rd, which becomes Elfin Forrest Rd, and with its one traffic lane in each direction, blind curves, and limited shoulder areas it is absolutely not equipped to sustain heavy traffic in a safe manner, particularly of the mixed type, involving both bicycles and cars. But the developer proposed no mitigation, and is not even acknowledging the inevitable traffic increase on these roads as project phases are completed. No evidence was provided to support their view.

The traffic has already increased since the start of Harmony Grove Village construction, which creates backups even with something as routine as Monday morning EDCO trash pickup, because there are few safe places to pass on Elfin Forest Rd and Harmony Grove Rd. My fairly recent conversation with a deputy from San Diego

BF-1

Thank you for your introductory comments. The Project is proposing a semi-rural General Plan Land Use Designation (see Response G-6). The Project site is was used as agricultural property in the past (prior to the Coco Fire) and does not provide recreational amenities, whereas the Proposed Project would add multi-use trails, public parks, and equestrian staging facilities to increase the area’s recreational value. Regarding community character, see Topical Response: General Plan Amendment and Subarea Boundary Adjustment CEQA Analysis. The comment is correct that the Project has the potential for (traffic) safety hazards, though the comment is not specific in its meaning. The potential for hazard impacts are discussed in Response BF-2 and Subsections 2.8.2.7 and 2.8.2.8 of the EIR. Impacts are mitigated.

BF-2

See Response K-165 for an explanation of how a small percentage of Project traffic would use Harmony Grove Road and how traffic volumes on Harmony Grove Road are much lower than on other roadways. In addition, based on the trip distribution using the SANDAG Traffic Model, the Project would add fewer than 25 peak hour trips to Elfin Forest Road which is less than significant and does not require traffic analysis according to the County Traffic Analysis Requirements. Regarding bicycle safety, see Response AG-4.

COMMENTS

RESPONSES

BF-2
cont.

County Sheriff's Department confirmed that the traffic conditions are indeed deteriorating. In his opinion, the traffic is already at a level that makes it unsafe for cyclist to use these roads. And if the Valiano project is allowed to proceed, it will only get worse.

California CVC 21760 (a.k.a. Three Feet for Safety Act) requires motor vehicles to leave a 3-foot margin while passing a cyclist. With the increased traffic, compliance with this law will simply not be possible on these roads without bike lanes, resulting either in cyclists being hit by cars, or head-on collisions between cars travelling in opposite directions.

BF-3

In summary, we strongly believe the Valiano proposal should be rejected, or at least put on hold while a comprehensive traffic study is conducted by an independent party. To establish the baseline, this study needs to take in the account the increase in traffic that has already taken place since the construction started in Harmony Grove Village, and which is already impacting the safety of the residents and the visitors. Concrete mitigation steps also need to be proposed and funded. This will most likely require full, uninterrupted bike lane to be created on both sides of Harmony Grove Rd and Elfin Forest Rd between the new developments and San Elijo Rd.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider our concerns.

Daniel Kucharski & Joanna Kiljan
8080 Harmony Grove Rd
Elfin Forest, CA 92029

BF-3

The TIA was prepared by professional traffic consultants (LLG) according to County Report Requirements and has been reviewed by County PDS for thoroughness and accuracy. The study included a cumulative traffic analysis that included Proposed Project traffic and Harmony Grove Village traffic. As stated in Response AG-4, only a small percentage of Project traffic would head west on Harmony Grove Road, and the Project would not create a significant traffic hazard to bicyclists nor preclude the provision of bike lanes. Harmony Grove Road is a Mobility Element road, classified as a 2.2E and 2.2C Light Collector, including bike lanes. Bike lanes would be added on any segments of the road that are improved to public road standards in the future based on private development or County improvements. No changes to the EIR resulted from the comment.