



WILLAND PARISH COUNCIL

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Email:

Response from Willand Parish Council To MDDC Local Plan Review Scoping Report - July 2013

1. General Observations

1.1 Our response will deal with the report itself in general terms following the format of the report. The response will identify Willand Parish issues but with a mind to the general issues and concept of the report/consultation.

1.2 We endeavour to tailor comments to fit in with National Policy and Guidelines but do have some issues with these in relation to business and farm diversification, particularly where these affect established identified designated 'Employment Sites'.

1.3 The will to cover acres of open countryside and good food producing farmland with solar panels, and to a lesser degree, wind farms gives great cause for concern when the provision of 'green' energy now seems to be a greater priority than feeding the population. It is appreciated that Central Government are now reviewing some guidelines. This also appears to be in conflict with the VISION set out in 1.31 of the report – *Attractive countryside providing for biodiversity and employment* – contradictory to say the least.

2. Neighbourhood Planning

2.1 Having taken into account the comments in paragraph 1.34 of the report and the fact that Willand Parish has 'virtually been built all over already' the Parish Council have no current intentions to prepare a separate Neighbourhood Plan. This position could change in the future if it is felt that the Local Plan Review does not represent or take account of our views and we would feel adversely affected.

3. Amount and distribution and development

3.1 Taking account of the comments made in 2.4 and 2.6 of the report Willand feel that they have already 'contributed' to the figures over and above a village quota over the past years and if current applications are permitted to go through this comment will be even more relevant. This is particularly concerning as many infrastructure needs have been ignored and/or neglected.

3.2 The comments in 2.9 of the report are of particular concern as Willand has designated employment sites which are underutilised, primarily due to planners allowing

‘industrialisation’ of farmland and building just over the border in a nearby parish. This is now leading to employment land in Willand being made the subject of applications for its use for housing. If allowed this will result in more travelling to work journeys for local parishioners. This will have environmental and clean air implications not to mention fuel costs to householders.

3.3 Of the three options shown Option 1 is preferred. Option 2 has minimal support due to the prospect of more food producing land being lost and countryside being degraded. Journeys would be increased particularly if the development is not supported by suitable infrastructure provision. Option 3 finds no support – in fact vociferous opposition.

4. Housing

4.1 Provision of Affordable Housing is a recognised need, particularly in some rural areas to retain young families in villages. These should be developed to provide for a LOCAL need and not be used to ‘ship’ people in from other areas where they give little or no contribution to the local community and have no empathy with the local area. The weakening of the ‘exception site’ policy to allow the introduction of ‘market’ housing for developer profit is not supported – see 2.16 of the report.

4.2 It is noted that Mid Devon is up to and over provision quota of the Core Strategy requirement – 2.19 of the report – yet Willand are faced with another 50+ houses being ‘forced’ upon us with no infrastructure and the loss of employment sites. It is hoped that 2.22 of the report will be actioned.

4.3 Housing Surveys carried out on behalf of the Parish Council show that we have met our local housing need and very few houses will be needed for ‘locals’ in the next five years. *[If any Social Rented Affordable Homes are supplied LOCAL people are looking for 3 bedroomed houses.]* This is further supported by MDDC Forward Planning and Conservation Officer in objecting to a current proposed development. It is concerning that this appears to be ignored by Planning Committee and Officers.

4.4 Option 1 still appears to be relevant. Option 2 would be supported if it resulted in a lowering of the density in villages.

5. Employment

5.1 The comments in 2.27 of the report are in accord with our observations in Willand. We are sure that this is aggravated by the ‘farm diversification’ activities in close proximity to the village as units provided in this way are ‘cheaper’ for business to use than on established employment sites.

5.2 Current policies over employment sites which allows the owner to apply for housing on the site if it has not be taken up for employment is a questionable policy and needs urgent review. We have experience of business being ‘forced’ from sites and refused on other sites. There is a justified perception that some sites are being

manipulated to make them available for housing by showing that they are not needed for employment.

5.3 Willand Parish Council continues to be totally opposed to major development at J27 of the M5 for many of the reasons outlined in 2.31 of the report. It is also the 'gateway' from the motorway into Devon and particularly Mid and North Devon – what sort of welcome would it give visitors/holiday makers to enter the area through an 'industrial site'? We also have concerns as to increased traffic density as should there be a problem and the M5 is closed the traffic is then diverted through the centre of Willand with all the disruption that causes.

5.4 Both listed options have their difficulties but retaining employment opportunities close to housing development should be a preferred option in the interests of carbon footprint reduction. A policy which allows scattered 'mini employment sites' in open countryside should not be supported.

6. Retail

6.1 The existing policy as shown in 2.35 of the report is preferred as there is a place for town centres and independent retail units. Out of town or edge of town large retail establishments have surely proven their adverse effect on town centres.

6.2 Option 1 seems to us to be the preferred option.

7. Infrastructure

7.1 Willand feels more aggrieved over this issue than any other. In the past developments have had some infrastructure provision in them and then these have been 'watered down' or dismissed completely by subsequent amendments/deals done between planners and developers without any consultation or consideration of the Parish. To a greater degree this is still the case. Community provision in the main has been locally achieved – not as the result of policy provision. Such things as play areas which have been provided are minimal and not well maintained and now there are 'rumblings' about trying to close some to save cost.

7.2 As a Parish there have been issues over access to S106 funds and evidence of MDDC 'dipping into' the monies. As to how the provision of the CIL monies will be available for use will need to be clearly set in policy and then only time will tell as to how successful it will be for Parish/Town Councils.

7.3 At 2.47 in the report a relief road in Cullompton is referred to and Willand would argue for a road connecting the developments on the Tiverton Road around the back of St. Andrews Estate or farther out which would connect to the Willand Road. This is essential as traffic trying to get to Willand which cannot get to the motorway has had to go to Tiverton and back around Halberton. This was particularly evident when drainage works were being carried out on the main road in Cullompton. Perhaps this is what is being considered at 3.11 of the report.

7.4 On current experience to date Willand have questions about both options. Both require 'expansion' and further explanation to enable informed comment.

8. Environment

8.1 There is a perceived concern that too liberal agreement is made for some developments, which although not perhaps built on a flood plain, restrict the effectiveness of a flood plain when needed to deal with major rainfall. It is also felt that drain off from some developments aggravates flooding. It is appreciated that 'persuasive' reports are provided by developers but it is felt that policy needs to allow for these to be subjected to greater robust scrutiny.

8.2 Either option would be acceptable if robustly interpreted and followed.

9. Land Allocation

9.1 Willand has no observations as to Tiverton other than those already submitted separately in relation to the proposed Eastern Development. There are no comments in relation to the sections on Crediton and Bampton.

9.2 The suggested relief road in Cullompton between Tiverton Road and Willand Road as referred to in 3.11 of the report would be supported. Any urban extension of Cullompton which could be seen as making Willand a suburb of Cullompton would not be supported. Option 1 would be the preferred option.

9.3 Willand is identified as one of the 21 villages. Previous development and that currently being considered far exceeds the *very limited development* referred to in 3.29 in the report. 3.32 in the report gives further support to this view. In the past 10 years Willand has had in excess of 1,200 homes built with little or no infrastructure improvement. This is far in excess of the approximate share of 3 per year under core policy for villages.

9.4 The settlement area for Willand is virtually filled and we would not support any extension of that settlement area. There are two exception sites for affordable housing identified outside of the settlement area. It is NOT ACCEPTABLE locally for these to become inclusive of market housing. We have past experience of developers and planners turning an affordable housing site into market housing without consultation so any such proposals on these sites will need to be viewed with careful scrutiny.

9.5 Option 1 would be preferred option and it would be hoped that our representations as to 'excessive development' already would be positively considered in any policy proposals.

10. Managing Development

10.1 If the policy indicated at 4.2 becomes a reality in spite of observations and representation made it is considered that the Affordable Houses should be built and available BEFORE any Market Houses on the site.

10.2 Option 1 would be preferred. Option 2 should only be considered if full consultation took place at the time on any proposed changes of policy.

30th July 2013.