

Thursday 20th March 2014

Paddock Wood,
Culmstock,
Cullompton,
Devon
EX15 3JX



Dear Sir,

Thank you for placing the proposed development plan for Mid Devon so accessibly on the Mid Devon website.

I have been able to read and evaluate the proposals thoroughly. This letter intends to do three things. Firstly, this is a formal objection to housing development proposals at three sites in Hemyock, two at Culmbridge Farm and one at Culmstock Road. Secondly, this is a formal objection to housing development proposals at two sites in Culmstock, one at Highfields, and one at Glebe & Rackfields. Thirdly, this letter outlines my preference in building a new community at Junction 27 of the M5 in order to deliver Mid Devon's housing needs.

Formal Objection to Housing Development Proposals at

- a) Culmbridge Farm, Hemyock
- b) North of Culmbridge Farm, Hemyock
- c) Culmstock Road, Hemyock

As you will know, Hemyock has undergone some considerable changes in land use over the past decade or so. With both agricultural and industrial land being changed to residential, the village's population has grown significantly. The village's infrastructure has not kept pace with these residential developments. The primary school and doctor's surgery are already full beyond capacity, and patients are frequently asked to make rather inconvenient journeys to either Dunkeswell or Churchinford. With no bus to the latter, this has particular problems for those less mobile in our community. Similarly, the village's sewage system has not been updated for a number of decades regardless of the much greater strain which has been placed upon it. For these reasons, I am forced to object to further housing development on sites at Culmbridge Farm and on Culmstock Road. These developments do not constitute sustainable development but represent an opportunity for the continued degradation of our local area, with even greater strain being placed upon it.

Furthermore, following recent weather activity, not just this winter, the problem of flooding both in Hemyock and other villages along the valley has only proliferated. The valley floor has flooded historically, however the increase in flash flooding, which has taken place on Culmstock Road near the Castle; on Castle Hill flooding the pub and church; and on Station Road where drainage systems have failed to move the water away, is primarily exacerbated by the removal of natural drainage capacity where landuse change has reduced the infiltration rates of the river system. As a result, Hemyock has suffered flooding not derived from a rising a water table in the valley, but rather because of less infiltration into the land as it is covered with non-permeable materials.

On the issue of flooding, Culmbridge Road is heavily liable to regular flooding, and the site at Culmbridge Farm is marked as being in the floodplain on the plans put forward. I believe

that these homes will flood, or that the diversion of the water may flood homes further downstream at new the development recently built at Millhayes on the site of the old factory; and at Whitehall; and increasingly The Strand in Culmstock is becoming liable to more regular flooding downstream from Culmbridge Farm.

Perhaps misleading about Hemyock, and indeed the entire road network from Hemyock to the A38, is that the B3391 comes into the village. This has encouraged large vehicles, including articulated lorries to travel through the village. However, the classification of this road is inaccurate. I feel that development may be being placed along this section of the Upper Culm Valley because of this road seeming, on paper, to provide infrastructure to cope with increases in traffic level. In fact, it was irresponsible of the Parish Council, over twenty years ago to suggest the road should become a 'B' classification. It is very narrow in a number of places and inadequate for the level and type of traffic it now experiences as a result of development over these recent decades. Leaving Hemyock up Pencross Hill is also extremely problematic, as this is the main route to Wellington, Taunton and northbound M5 (J26).

We have been fortunate in the village to have recently had built a number of affordable homes for local people. As a twenty-one year old, I welcome this and value the Parish Councils efforts in establishing the Community Land Trust. However, these new proposals include no further provision of affordable homes and these market led properties will continue to remain out of the reach of people like me, and indeed will help inflate the market as a whole.

Formal Objection to Housing Development Proposals at

- a) Highfields, Culmstock
- b) Glebe & Rackfields, Culmstock

The problems explained above are just as relevant for the proposals at Culmstock. Culmstock Primary School is very well patronised and more or less full. Further, villagers in Culmstock use the facilities in Hemyock. This will not change with development proposals in the village unless hefty 106 Agreements are made, which I find unlikely. Therefore development in Culmstock has direct impact in exacerbating the problems already noted in Hemyock.

For Highfields, I feel the road infrastructure for access either from Hunters Way or Hunters Hill will be inadequate for the number of houses proposed. Hunters Hill is a narrow road which becomes narrower as one passes the playing fields north of the village.

Similarly, for Glebe & Rackfields, access from either Culmstock Road or Haringay Farm will again be inadequate for the size of development proposed. Impact on traffic levels between Culmstock and Hemyock; Culmstock and the A38; and between Culmstock and Uffculme will be considerable and road widening would be essential.

Flooding in Culmstock is also an issue and the village has flooded on the Culmstock Road close to Fry's Farm; on Prescott Road close to Oakdale Farm; and increasingly on The Strand and at Millmoor close to the pub.

For these reasons I object to the housing development proposals at Highfields, Culmstock and at Glebe & Rackfields, Culmstock. I do not oppose the site at Linhay Close because I feel the size of development proposed here will make negligible differences to road infrastructure.

Preference in favour of the creation of a new community at J27

My objection to the houses in Hemyock and Culmstock points to my general objection to Mid Devon's Option One. The urban expansion of Tiverton and of Cullompton, as well as additional homes to the surrounding village, is both inadequate and inappropriate. However, while I may disagree with this, my preference would certainly be, if development is to be had at all, a new community at Junction 27 of the M5 motorway. As a District as a whole, I believe Mid Devon would benefit much more greatly by choosing this option. We are more likely to achieve the real community benefits in a large development than we are if we continue to arbitrarily add houses to existing communities. The Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital in Exeter, Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, Uffculme School, Cullompton Community College and Tiverton High School all suffer from reaching their capacity and not having manoeuvrability to easily expand. With the introduction of a new community, I would hope that the problems experienced such as these may be addressed. For example, this is a fantastic opportunity to build a new primary and secondary school, as well as building medical facilities to lessen the strain on those which currently exist. While I understand that the threshold to build a new secondary school in a new community is 6,000 homes, it would be possible to lessen the strain already experienced at nearby Uffculme School, and therefore alter the catchments which both schools would serve.

In the same vein, although my preference is for development at Junction 27, it is a shame that space here has not been allocated in detail for community facilities. Hotels, cinemas, concert halls, outdoor leisure parks have all been mentioned, yet this does not address the very real problem associated with over-stretched public services in the District. Furthermore, I feel it is important to understand more fully the market surrounding some of the hoped employment deliverables. For example, has adequate research been undertaken which suggests that a leisure destination is suitable for the area, especially considering facilities already exist at Tiverton, Honiton, Wellington and Taunton.

Overall, I object to the policy of urban expansion as I believe it will not deliver sustainable development of which the National Planning Policy Framework necessitates. Instead, I feel it is more easily achieved at the site at Junction 27. However, my support for this is extremely limited in light of the proposals not including essential new services. I urge the council not to accept any proposals which fail to take significant account of impact on local services.

The Consultation meeting at Culmstock Village Hall on Tuesday 18th March was interesting and beneficial, I appreciate the presence of a senior planner and councillors from Mid Devon District Council. Aside from this event, the consultation process has been unsuccessful. The Consultation event taking place in Hemyock on Wednesday 12th February took place between ten o'clock in the morning and one o'clock in the afternoon. A three hour period in the middle of the day when the vast majority of villagers are at work is quite simply not acceptable and surely cannot be taken as valuable consultation time. I urge the Council reconsider this mechanism and its effectiveness in the future.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider my objections.

Your sincerely,

Mark Balchin

