

Local Plan Review: Options Consultation

Vision and Spatial Strategy

This looks commendable but the difficulty will be in actually achieving the vision.

S1 and S2

As above

S3

It is difficult fully to evaluate the options without the results of the SHMA; it is most unfortunate that this is not yet available. If the projected figure of 8,400 new houses proves to be an over estimate then I would prefer Option 1, reinforcing the viability of the main towns and with a new settlement rendered unnecessary. If the projected figure of 8,400 new houses is proved accurate then I would prefer Option 2; I do not believe that development of Tiverton should continue to the north of the A361.

If Option 2 is pursued then I would prefer 2(a) with development to be at J27. This appears to be much less risky regarding flooding than the J28 proposal and J27 is more viable if a new junction setup is required at J28.

S4 – S6

Evidence is that the target of 35% affordable dwellings is not met and that the real proportion is nearer 25%.

It is obviously sensible to provide new housing which is adaptable for future needs, especially in allowing the elderly to remain within the community with which they are familiar and avoiding excessive care costs both for them and for the public purse.

If employment sites are insufficient to meet the needs of the plan (2.32) then the increased working population will have to seek employment outside the Mid-Devon area. Therefore, in order to meet the requirements of reduced carbon emissions, using public transport, cycling and walking, houses will need to be provided in the areas closest to employment; Devon County Council have noted that: "the plan will need to recognise the interaction between the district and the major employment growth anticipated in the Exeter area."

I do not believe that a major retail development is required in the area; this will only serve to take retail activity away from the main towns and the major shopping areas outside the Mid Devon area, at Exeter and Taunton.



S7 – S9

The plan recognises that there is a funding gap in the provision of infrastructure.

Devon County Council: “Another benefit is that concentration into larger sites creates economies of scale facilitating infrastructure investment.” Significant development in distant villages will not help with this; villages risk becoming rural housing estates for urban workers.

S10

The NPPF states that: “The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscape. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.”

I strongly support this policy.

S11 -S15

The plans for the towns are reasonable.

S14 – Villages

I live in Hemyock, which is one of the villages listed as suitable for limited development. Hemyock has undergone considerable development in the last 30 years, resulting in:

- Overcapacity at the sewage works and overflow of sewage
- Limited infrastructure at the school, meaning that new residents are at times obliged to take their children elsewhere
- The Surgery is utilising all available space and could not cope with more demand.

Mid Devon Sustainable Community Strategy notes that: “much of the recent (population) increase is down to inward migration from other parts of the UK. The largest increase is among those of retirement age.” This changing population is likely to put even more pressure on health resources.

Employment

The proposals for Hemyock are for housing only and do not include any provision whatsoever for employment; existing work units are currently under subscribed, thus any new residents seeking work will have to travel. There is only one bus per day for Taunton and one for Honiton that would enable a person to travel to these towns for a 9 to 5 working day in the centre of the towns, the timing of the buses is very restrictive. Travel to these or other locations by walking or cycling is most unlikely due to the nature of the terrain and the hazardous roads and therefore journeys are likely to be by car; this is in direct contravention of the national priority to reduce carbon emissions by reducing journeys made by car. New residents seeking work will also be in competition with those from the major new Longforth Farm development to the east of Wellington.

Roads

It is recognised that the road infrastructure in the area is restricted, with narrow roads and bends; the main road leading north from the village includes a section where single file travel is necessary. There is considerable parking on the village streets and access to the shops is impossible without using the roadway; any increase in traffic will endanger pedestrians and cyclists.

Landscape - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Hemyock is in the Blackdown Hills AONB. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act and the National Planning Policy Framework require authorities to contribute to and enhance the natural environment. Devon Landscape Policy Group and the Blackdown Hills AONB stress the importance of landscape and its contribution to the tourism industry. The NPPF also desires tourism to be supported.

Of the 3 suggested Hemyock sites, the Conigar Close site would be the least visually intrusive, the site to the west of Culmbridge would be visually intrusive and development on the site to the north of Culmbridge Farm would have a massive visual impact. Both Culmbridge sites would extend the housing well beyond the existing limit.

In appendix 2 the West of Culmbridge site has a statement (G) that the provision of 80 houses could be out of scale with a settlement the size of Hemyock. This must also be true for the North of Culmbridge site.

Flooding

The Culm and its tributaries around Hemyock flood, and have done so frequently over the last winter. Current thinking is moving towards absorbing rainfall in the uplands and reducing the flow to the lowlands. Any development would affect run-off, particularly development on the North of Culmbridge site which includes part of the flood plain and would thus offer fewer options for the retention of water.

Conclusion

If Hemyock is to undergo any further development I would only support the provision of affordable housing for local people at the Conigar Close site.

Other issues

Hemyock is a parish adjoining another County and another Devon District and will be affected by policies in adjacent plans. There is also a danger that, in being on the periphery of both District and County, Hemyock is poorly served by infrastructure investment.

From

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