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Local Plan Review Consultation
Forward Planning
Mid Devon District Council
Phoenix House
Phoenix Lane
Tiverton
EX16 6PP

21 March, 2014

Dear Forward Planning Team,

Re:- Draft Local Plan Review

I write as a resident of Halberton with concerns as to the possible/probable effects of the Local Plan Review on Halberton and its relationship with Tiverton. In particular I am opposed to any further development to the east of Tiverton on the Hartnoll Farm site (option 1).

I understand that the options numbered 1, 2a and 2b presented in the Local Plan Review, in particular as far as Tiverton is concerned, depend on a question of principle upon which the Council has yet to decide, namely whether to continue to pursue a "town-centric" policy, or to move to a policy of creating new communities. In the first instance I would suggest that what might be appropriate for one town, for example Crediton, might not be appropriate for other towns in the District.

In the case of Tiverton, the "town-centric" policy as represented by the Hartnoll Farm option in the Local Plan Review is no longer "town-centric" but, instead, urban sprawl creating a straggling linear shaped settlement with the original town of Tiverton stuck on the tail like a tadpole's head. Halberton, itself, would be sucked in to this urban sprawl. With the possibility that a significant number of dwellings might be constructed at Sampford Peverell as well, there is the prospect of an intermittent built-up area extending to Tiverton Parkway Railway Station, and beyond to the link road and the M5 - all this along a minor road which already barely copes with a high density of traffic. Halberton at first, and later Sampford Peverell, will be lost to a dormitory corridor looking towards the Motorway and Exeter and Taunton and not back to Tiverton, thus doing nothing for the civic life and economy of Tiverton.

There has been much in the local press in recent months about proposals for a retail and leisure complex at Junction 27 on the M5. There has been talk of a Multiplex cinema, of a food mart, of a transport museum, and of recreational facilities. If this is not simply hot air, such a development would make option 2a, the building of a new settlement at Junction 27/Willand, if carefully planned and integrated with the retail complex, an attractive proposition.

Equally, option 2b, a settlement to the east of M5 Junction 28, would be preferable to the Hartnoll Farm option, not least because it has been put forward by Cullompton Town Council itself and presumably, therefore, meets with the approval of a significant number of Cullompton's residents.

If the Council does decide that it intends to persist with its "town-centric" policy with respect to Tiverton it should seek to make sure that it really is truly "town-centric", and that any development is within easy access of the commercial centre of Tiverton, with good transport links to town centre services. Hartnoll Farm does not meet these criteria, being too far from Tiverton and from urban services. Public Transport links are currently indifferent. In addition, the soil of much of Hartnoll Farm is classified as Grade 1. Land of such quality is in short supply. The National Planning Policy Framework (para 112) stipulates that "local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land."

I understand that some members of the public commenting on the Local Plan Review have drawn attention to the potential for the expansion of Tiverton north of the A361, in particular north of Gornhay Cross. This area is closer to the centre of Tiverton, has better transport links to town centre services, and, in addition, has the benefit of the wider transport link of the A361 connecting to the M5, and, furthermore, is Grade 2 and 3 soil. Again, para 112 of the NPPF states, "Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality."

Development in this area would, indeed, be truly "town-centric".

Yours faithfully,