

**Geoff R Wheeler Blackdown View Oakfield Willand Devon EX15 2UA**

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



23<sup>rd</sup> March

By email

Dear sirs

**Response to Local Plan Review Options Consultation**

As residents of Willand we want to register our strong OBJECTION to the proposals to expand the Settlement limit specifically the proposals for Quicks Farm and the proposed New Settlement at Junction 27.

Both developments will in our opinion have a negative effect on the Village as well as the surrounding Towns of Tiverton and Cullompton. If there is to be any residential development within Willand this should be appropriate for the village, make a significant contribution towards the existing infrastructure and be within the existing Settlement Boundary. Extending the Settlement Boundary is totally wrong, allowing the village to continue to "sprawl" further away from the village centre and ultimately closer to Uffculme.

We find it incredulous that RABI is seeking to promote the development/sale of good quality, well used agricultural land when their own mission statement says they support the farming community.

In the email from Mr James Gibbs representing RABI (dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013) it is suggested that some "community led development" would be good for Willand. We are all wondering who they have been talking to in the local community, because no one seems to know how 68 new homes are going to help the village; quite the contrary we think.

If there has to be any development in Willand surely underutilised or derelict Brownfield sites should be considered in the first instance.

**QUICKS FARM**

We are not against development "per-say" but it has to be in the right location. Just because Willand has seen more than its fair share of development over the years it should not be accepted that this should continue. The Proposals are being promoted by the Land owner (RABI) and not the Farmer. The loss of this good agricultural land must have a negative impact on the farms viability. The loss of food production land is self evident with Solar farms and farm diversification, which is possibly

accepted as a means to allow farms to retain their viability but in this case it would appear to be purely for financial gain.

### **Protection of the Natural Environment**

The site can be seen quite prominently from the surrounding countryside as the land rises toward the Blackdown Hills. More locally the site is a haven for wildlife, personally we regularly see bats, owls and sparrow hawks fly over the site. We are also sure that dormice are present in the hedgerows. Far from having a neutral effect on the development we can only see this having a significant detrimental effect.

### **Affordable Housing**

We understand from the Parish Council that the Landowner has acquired the small *exception site* at the entrance to Quicks Farm allocated for 10 Affordable Homes. We believe it is naive to think that the sites won't be combined, (persuasive arguments from developers will see to that) and although the proposals are suggesting 68 units are built, this is in excess of the recommendations for villages of 30/HA, the net gain for affordable homes would likely to be less than 8.

Looking at the most recent Local Needs Housing Survey the future (20 years) predicted needs for Affordable Housing are more than adequately catered for with the currently allocated exception sites. Given the Parish Council are only supportive of providing affordable homes in the Village for "Local People" which we support and believe is right, the creation of an excess supply would only lead to people being shipped in from other areas. The Parish Council are rightly concerned about the abuse of the exception site policy allowing market housing to "support" affordable which will happen given the [persuasive] way in which viability reports will be presented which we are certain will happen here.

### **Access**

It is suggested that an adequate access can be achieved via the Quicks Farm access onto the main Uffculme Road. Noting that the 30mph zone would need to be extended we still fail to see how adequate visibility and footpaths can be accommodated. Because of its nature this is a very fast road and vehicles enter and leave the current 30mph zone at speed. If as has been suggested it is the intention to construct a footpath on the far side of the road this is ludicrous and will inevitably result in accidents with pedestrians (children) trying to cross this road. Alternative access into the neighbouring developments is not possible due to the limited widths of the roads (shared surface) and the already "poor" visibility at the junctions with Willand Moor Road.

### **Infrastructure**

This has been well documented but it is obvious that any further development of Willand will put even more pressure on the current infrastructure. Not least the Primary School which is already over capacity and has to share resources with other public buildings off site, the medical facilities not to mention the very limited "Public" Open Space in the village. History tells us all that developers will promise lots of good things and then one by one though various "spurious" arguments they will gradually be withdrawn.

## **Sustainability/Environmental**

We note the Landowners agent believes that Willand is "highly sustainable" and wonder whether he has ever visited the village or whether just felt these were the right words to use in his email?

With limited employment in the Village given that most of the space is occupied by Warehousing and Distribution employing very few people the vast majority of people who live in the village will have drive to work. There is a bus service but this is not often convenient for commuters as the times do not coincide with work patterns. Equally the services towards Taunton are not that good!! Shopping tends to be done in some of the larger Towns so again the need to drive. Surely to encourage further development in the neighbouring Towns, as has always been the Council Policy, must be more sustainable and far from having a negative impact on the village which would have a positive impact on the Towns.

As recently as July of last year, commenting on the Local Plan the Planning Inspector emphasised the need to "*significantly reduce housing development rates in the rural areas where historic growth rates have been high*" Focusing new development in Towns with limited development in Bampton (echoing the Mid Devon Core Strategy designed to run until 2026). We are no experts in this but the National Planning Policy Framework states that Housing should be located where it accords with sustainable development and new homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances, (encouraging the use of Brownfield Sites over green.) Development in villages should be limited to meet "Local Needs", must reflect the vision and aspirations of the Local Community and be sustainable. It must also take into account the economic benefits of agricultural land. We fail to see how the development of this site would "tick any of these boxes". Far from improving the economic conditions this would have a negative impact on the farm. Similarly socially and environmentally the development would be damaging.

From a Health and Safety perspective there have to be issues with the inevitable close proximity of the development to the existing working farm. Large vehicles manoeuvring, impacts of slurry, flies and noise etc.

## **JUNCTION 27 TO HALFWAY HOUSE**

We have not spoken to anyone in the village who supports these proposals, quite the contrary and believe it would be hugely damaging for Cullompton as well as Tiverton at a time when towns are struggling to survive.

Although it has already been said it is worth repeating that the proposed development will have a massive negative impact on the environment at Junction 27 the "gateway" to Mid and North Devon. Given that Cullompton "want" the development at Junction 28 this will help to support the Town as well as providing revenues for some of the infrastructure requirements.

We note that the Parish Council have responded very comprehensively on this site so have not sought to duplicate their comments only really to echo what has been said about this development.

Yours Faithfully

*Geoff R Wheeler*

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