

Mrs A Stopford & Mr R Stopford  
1 Tythe Barn Cottages,  
Culmstock  
EX153HS



Dear Sir/Madam

We are writing to object to the proposals in the Local Plan Review concerning building work in Culmstock.

1. The scale of the proposal seems excessive and unnecessary, aside from **Affordable Housing** which I support so long as there is a need, which I think there is in Culmstock, but not on a grand scale – the affordable housing we have at the moment is not necessarily used by people who were supposed to fulfil the criteria, ie living/working in Culmstock. I know of one tenant who works away and whose children go to school in another county.
2. As for **private housing**, there are at least four properties for sale within the village, one of which has been for sale for at least a year, so this does not indicate to me a need for any further private housing to be sold at current market prices.
3. The Local Plan Policy S14 states, 'development will be limited to proposals within their **defined settlement limits**'. So I can't quite understand why the two largest are both outside these limits.
4. "Provide infrastructure to meet needs of the community" (p 17) is not commensurate with Devon County Council's recent decision to minimise maintenance of minor roads, a situation which would be exacerbated by any increased road traffic from any rural development. The **roads** are in an appalling state and we have been told that one road (Blackwater Road) will be closed for 18 months (!), thus increasing the volume of traffic between Hemyock & Culmstock on the main road. If you calculate that for every house built, there will probably be two cars, as no one will be working in the village as the jobs are not there, then that is 100 additional cars going in and out of the village. I just don't think this is remotely realistic. The bus service would go no way to alleviating the flow of cars using the village. It is particularly obvious that increased rural populations would inevitably increase car usage; from those villages lucky enough to have any sort of bus service, the existing choice of routes are extremely limited which ensures that journeys to alternative locations will have to be made by car, even for those new residents who choose to use the existing bus service.
5. I taught at **Culmstock School** for 8 years and I know it is now fit to bursting and to increase numbers they would have to suffer severe overcrowding in classrooms, to the detriment of the children's education. As well as the school, **the doctor's surgery** could not cope.

6. **Environmental concerns:** It is understood that Mid-Devon needs to accommodate more housing, but from the point of view of Villages & Hamlets, there are obvious objections concerning the environment. 'Ways that enhance the environment' (p15) and 'protect and enhance their environmental assets, including their character, biodiversity, heritage and setting' (p16). 'Moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature' (p18), are not commensurate with any of the proposals for development in Blackdown Hills villages. We already live in one of the most beautiful and naturally diverse landscapes and ancient built environments in England, all of which would be spoilt by extension of village Settlement Limits. Under the Countryside section (p 17) to "Promote environmental enhancement including landscape and biodiversity" seems intrinsically to deny the possibility of developing rural villages and hamlets in the Blackdown Hills! To emphasise the objection to rural development in the Blackdown Hills, I would emphasise your own Development Strategy (p18) which states an environmental role in "contributing to protecting our natural, built and historic environment, and as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, etc.....".
7. **Flooding** has been a problem the last couple of years and though I am not an engineer, I do know when we lived in a house close to where the Glebe Proposal would be built, and our neighbours put in a drive, we had all sorts of issues with water run off. Estates with driveways and roads are known to change the water tables and pose risks for the village.
8. **The effect of Junction 27** proposal taken in conjunction with all the building proposals in the surrounding villages, with the ambitious Junction would put all of them under a huge strain. What will happen to our countryside in twenty years time?
9. **Employment:** I'm not sure how much employment (which our Council uses as a selling point for all the building proposals) will be increased. Jobs are not exactly falling in our laps, and this will bring more people competing for more jobs. Should the building go ahead (obviously on a more limited scale) I would like to see the developers using local labour. That is something positive which could come out of this.

I do hope these points will be considered, I think they're all very important and one of my objections is that this government is giving seemingly random building targets to the whole of England, without taking into consideration the actual need. What about 'Localism'?

Yours sincerely

Alexandra and Rob Stopford