



WELLINGTON BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Formal response to Mid Devon District Council's Local Plan Review

Wellington Business Association is a representative organisation for the full range of businesses in Wellington and the surrounding area; its members include retailers, professional services, commercial companies and manufacturers. We are an associate member of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

Overall, on behalf of our members, we object to the proposed development at Junction 27 as it is just 8 miles from the centre of Wellington and would have a severe impact on the viability and sustainability of Wellington town centre retailers, as well as the many local suppliers to those businesses.

Our response is based on the views of our members at a meeting held in Wellington on the 19th March, regarding the Junction 27 proposal for a commercial, leisure, retail and housing development.

We appreciate at this stage there are a number of options for sites to be considered for the emerging local plan, and not all of them will be allocated into your final plan. However, we would urge that the J27 option is not one of them.

We summarise our response by making the following points

- Wellington has weathered the recession through a number of initiatives supported by local retail businesses, Wellington Town Council, and the wider business community. It has a diverse retail mix and fewer empty retail units than many towns of similar size. As a result it has emerged as a vibrant town in the last year, with independent shops across a wide range of sectors and has also become known as a food town, with food festivals and a fortnightly farmers market .
- Although your proposal for the development at J27 states that it would include “non-high street retailing” the proposal does include a Devon produce promotion centre and a designer retail village. Both of these would have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of Wellington. The inclusion of a cinema may also negatively impact Wellington’s independent cinema, the Wellesley. As a result, employment in the area will reduce and not be enhanced by this development
- We consider that it would be far better for Mid Devon District and Taunton Deane Councils to work together to explore ways to make our existing local towns more sustainable by investing in their future. This approach aligns with the “town centre first” policies of the National Planning Policy Framework

and policies should be adopted that support town centres' vitality and viability, rather than abandoning them for the option of an out-of-town development. The NPPF also makes clear that where a proposal would have a likely significant adverse impact on town centres it should be refused. This development will in our view have such an impact.

- This large scale development does not promote the principles of sustainable development outlined in the Mid Devon Local Plan Review, neither does it comply with the sustainable development priorities, outlined in that document, and focused on Tiverton, Cullompton and Cridition. While the Plan Review mentions a long term option for a new community, this development at J27 gives housing a low priority, at the expense of leisure and retail activities to attract M5 passing trade. Indeed, in the Policy S3 section on the amount and distribution of development, neither Option mentions the requirement for leisure and retail, concentrating on housing and commercial development.
- This development will create increased levels of pollution, through increased car use, destroy the natural environment and change the landscape. The Local Plan Review document mentions traffic congestion and the introduction of AQMAs in Cridition, Cullompton and potentially Tiverton and the publication of air quality action plans. This development will only add to these issues. In addition, such a development would also require investment in local public transport and surrounding road infrastructure – both of which are inadequate at the present time.
- Once in operation, this development will offer some employment to local inhabitants. However, because of its negative impact on surrounding towns, such as Wellington, employment in the region will show an overall reduction as existing businesses cease to trade, impacting further down the supply chain.
- Any perceived overall benefit to the local and regional economy would be short-lived and highly debateable; revenues generated would go into the coffers of major national / international concerns located outside the region. Specifically, construction of the development would be awarded to a national contractor, which would appoint its own sub-contractors which would also be located outside the region. In addition, operators of the retail and leisure elements of the development would all be nationals from outside the region.

Ian Stock
Chair of Wellington Business Association
For and on behalf of its members