

Mid-Devon Local Plan Review Options Consultation

Comments



Introduction

The Local Plan Review options seem to have been put together in a manner that could cause confusion and suggest dependencies exist between options when they do not. In particular, the inclusion of the proposed new community between J27 and Willand in the same policy as the proposed retail and industrial development at J27 (Policy J27) skews and obfuscates the real decisions that need to be made, which are as follows:

1. A decision to support or oppose the development at J27 to provide employment, leisure, tourism and retail facilities, and a retirement village, based on perceived local requirements;
2. A choice between continuing the previous policy of concentrating new housing at the three main towns in the district (Policy S3 Option 1) or creating a separate new community elsewhere (Policy S3 Option 2).
3. If Policy S3 Option 2 is adopted, then a choice between a new community at J28/East Cullompton (Policy CU11) and a new community at J27/Willand (part of Policy J27).

My comments that follow are based on these decisions. Please ensure that these comments are taken into account when policies for the Local Plan are being considered.

Proposed development at J27 to provide employment, leisure, tourism, and retail facilities, and a retirement village

I am **opposed** this development for the following reasons:

- The developer's business plan fails to demonstrate how this development will provide any economic benefits for Mid Devon. In addition, the business plan seems to be dependent on the site attracting visitors for as far afield as Street (Clark's Village) and North Devon (Atlantic Village). Is this realistic? Has any knock-on economic benefit for the District been clearly demonstrated or this just lazy assumption?
- The abundance of unused industrial development land at Tiverton East, Exeter, Willand and Wellington suggest that no further land is required at J27. It may be that large logistics businesses may find J27 a slightly more convenient site than these others, but shouldn't MDDC be looking to the interests of Mid Devon residents rather than the convenience of big business?
- J27 is often described as 'The Gateway to Devon'. A perusal of the Devon Tourist Information website makes it clear that tourists are attracted to Devon by the county's rural nature and the abundance of outdoor leisure pursuits that are available. There is no evidence that people will be attracted to the county for cinemas, concert halls and 'factory outlets'.
- The best way that Mid Devon can advertise its difference from other areas is by keeping the first motorway junction in Devon a rural site. Under the proposed development the first sight that will greet visitors will be an industrial park containing generic distribution warehouses owned by

national companies – in other words, it will look the same as just about every other motorway junction between Birmingham and Exeter.

- All the facilities at the proposed development will have to be accessed by car, so this is not a sustainable situation. The developers make much of the proposed link to Tiverton Parkway railway station but this is irrelevant – Tiverton Parkway can only be accessed by rail from Taunton and Exeter, where most of the facilities planned for J27 are already available.
- If the proposed development at J27 is commercially successful then there will be unacceptable repercussions for nearby towns such as Cullompton and Tiverton. Cullompton is especially vulnerable; it is universally agreed that making the town a vibrant and diverse community is essential to the wellbeing of the District, but the town's recent recovery is still very fragile and J27 could condemn Cullompton to becoming a soulless dormitory town for Exeter. Conversely, J27 is not commercially successful then the District would be left with an embarrassing white elephant.
- The inclusion of a small and unsustainable retirement community in the J27 plans makes no sense unless it has been included to set a precedent for housing development on the site – who would want to retire to a site only a few hundred yards from a motorway with no local everyday facilities such as shops, post office and doctor's surgeries? Including housing on the back of this scheme would be disastrous; as the J27 development progresses what would stop the developers from suddenly 'realising' that the outlet, cinema, concert hall etc. are now unfeasible and so houses should be built instead?

Policy S3 Option 1 (Town Focus) or Policy S3 Option 2 (New community)?

I **support** Policy S3 Option 1 and **oppose** Option 2 for the following reasons:

- Mid Devon is predominantly a rural county and development should therefore be concentrated in the existing mains towns as these provide the greatest number of community services and greatest opportunities for employment.
- Concentrating new development in existing towns will ensure that distances between homes, services and jobs will be shorter and reduces the reliance on private motor cars; this approach is therefore sustainable.
- Concentrating new development in existing towns creates economies of scale facilitating infrastructure investment.

It is worth noting that these are also the views expressed by Devon County Council in its response to the Mid Devon Local Plan Scoping Report in August 2013.

If Policy S3 Option 2 is adopted, then J28/East Cullompton (Policy CU11) or J27/Willand?

If S3 Option 2 is adopted then I **support** J28/East Cullompton and **oppose** J27/Willand for the following reasons:

- J27/Willand would be a greenfield site where local infrastructure would need to be provided; J28/Cullompton East would be adjacent to existing local facilities in the town. In other words, the benefits of concentrating development close to existing towns detailed above could be realised.
- J27/Willand would involve the destruction of a large and very visible area of green fields; J28/Cullompton East would be adjacent to an area that is already industrialised and developed.

- J28/Cullompton East would ensure the development of a successful and vibrant community in the town and encourage the rejuvenation of the industrial sites around J28 and the long-awaited provision of a railway station at Cullompton; J27/Willand would cripple the economy of Cullompton and condemn it to an existence as a dormitory town for Exeter.
- The local communities near J27/Willand are universally opposed to the development there; Cullompton Town Council supports J28/ Cullompton East. Why go against such strong local opinion? Or do the MDDC councillors and planners think they know better than the rest of us? Ditto re: 'no-brainer'.

To use a colloquialism, surely this decision is a 'no-brainer'?

David Wells
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