

Ack

Sandra Hutchings

From:
Sent: 23 March 2014 16:24
To: DPD
Subject: Local Plan Review Consultation



I wish to object to the proposals in the Mid Devon Local Plan Review: Options Consultation document in respect of the proposed development sites in Culmstock.

The sites in question are green field sites adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Your arguments for building on this land need to be very good indeed. They do not stand up to scrutiny. Culmstock is one of, I quote, "22 settlements... considered to be appropriate for a limited level of development, based on their physical characteristics, and the availability of the following three essential services identified: Educational Facility: Convenience Store: Transport Service" (para 2.65 Local Plan Review: Options Consultation).

1. Physical characteristics.

I have serious concerns about the strain additional residences will place on local infrastructure/services:

Flooding/drainage is a big worry. Whilst the river may threaten houses close to it, most of the flooding I have seen in Culmstock has been because the storm drains cannot cope with the volume of water running off the surrounding hills and properties away from the river have flooded for this reason. All the proposed development sites are uphill from Culmstock and will simply make a bad situation worse. The risk of flooding is going to increase. Result: Local people will neither be able to insure nor sell their houses. Community declines and dies.

Another worry is traffic. The proposed developments may well represent only a modest increase in population but Culmstock already suffers from too much traffic. It suffers from being a cut-through to Uffculme, particularly for heavy lorries visiting the feed mills there. Its ancient and treasured, but narrow, bridge is already hazardous for pedestrians (i.e. locals). We do not need more traffic!

Another worry is broadband. Culmstock already suffers slow data speeds for being too far from the Craddock exchange. Adding another 50-100 users will have a severe effect on the rest of us. That is directly contrary to one of Mid Devon's "Sustainable development priorities"!

2. Essential services.

The three services you have set out have been cherry-picked from the Rural Services in Mid Devon 2013 document. You say that this document "highlighted that in rural areas the provision of an educational facility, a convenience store and a transport service are essential for the sustainability of a settlement to accommodate new development" (para 2.68 Local Plan Review: Options Consultation).

Services in Mid Devon 2013 does not say that at all. It does not highlight or recommend anything; it just makes some rather general observations in its Summary (Para 12 of the document). Furthermore, it looks at 9 services; not just the 3 you have chosen. It is a shallow and analytically primitive arm's length analysis that is totally unsuitable as justification for deciding the fate of Culmstock over the next 15 or so years and, having read it, I do not think it was ever intended to have such strategic significance. If that is the basis of your argument that Culmstock can accommodate new development then you don't have a valid argument.

What are the benefits to Culmstock of these developments? There are very few. And what are the risks/likely detrimental effects on the village? There are several. How do the benefits outweigh the risks? Do the benefits outweigh the risks? I don't think so (and I do know a bit about strategy and business cases). How is Mid Devon District Council and the appropriate local councillors ensuring that the best interests of the Culmstock people, who elected them, are safeguarded? Can't see answers to any of these questions in the Mid Devon Local Plan Review: Options Consultation document.

Must do better!

Rob Arnold
Garden Close
Culmstock
EX15 3JL