

**To: Local Plan Review, Forward Planning,
Mid Devon District Council,
Phoenix House,
Tiverton, EX16 6PP**

March 22nd 2014

Dear Sirs

RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL PLAN FROM CAROLINE ROMIJN, BEWSLEY EDGE, COPPLESTONE EX17 5NX

I am writing:

- (1) to express general support for the 'town-centric' option for development in Mid Devon**
- (2) to object to any proposal for more than 50 new houses in total to be built in Coplestone in the next twenty years and**
- (3) to express the view that the most suitable site for the development of these 50 houses in Coplestone would be the Old Abattoir site.**

My reasons for these responses are as follows:

1) THE TOWN-CENTRIC OPTION

- a) I broadly support the town-centric option which should result in concentrations of population in the bigger towns, rather than too much dispersed rural development which entails the loss of further areas of valuable farmland and over-development of villages
- b) The town-centric option will ensure that the new housing is better served by existing educational, health and leisure facilities as well as public transport and employment opportunities.
- c) I strongly oppose excessive rural dispersal not only because it will result in extensive loss of valuable farmland and natural habitat, but also because (with very few local job opportunities) it will result in ever higher numbers of commuters on roads such as the A377. The road has limited capacity; increases in traffic will cause increased congestion, traffic danger/accidents, and air pollution in the town of Crediton and in the hearts of villages such as Newton St Cyres and Coplestone. Large amounts of new housing northwest of Crediton will mean higher numbers of commuters travelling higher mileages into Exeter, with negative environmental impacts including increases in CO₂ emissions.
- d) Specific problems arise in relation to increases in commuter traffic on the A377: significant time costs to businesses and individuals whenever the road becomes clogged or blocked (for example due to flood or incident), as there is no good alternative route available

2) A MAXIMUM OF 50 HOUSES FOR COPPLESTONE

Three sites is too many: I strongly oppose the possibility of *all three* sites under consideration being developed, with over 200 houses being built within the next twenty years. Coplestone has already experienced huge expansion in recent years, and needs a period of relative stability to develop greater community cohesion. The local infrastructure is not adequate to support 200 new houses: Coplestone has no health centre, no extra capacity in the school, no village hall (though we hope to have one), very few leisure or sports facilities, and extremely limited public transport in the evenings or at weekends. I would prefer to see only 25 – 30 new houses, but if we are under pressure to provide more housing than this then in my opinion 50 should be the maximum

3. CHOICE OF SITE

- a) **The 'Old Abattoir' site:** I consider this site between the A377 and the railway to be the most suitable of the possible new sites in Coppleshone, for several reasons. First, it is a compact site and entails the minimum loss of good farmland whilst still accommodating 48 houses. Second, it has the advantage of being within very easy walking distance of the station meaning that commuters are more likely to use public transport. Third, it would have direct access to the A377 avoiding extra traffic and danger for children in narrow streets like Sunnymead and Bewsley Hill (which has no footpath at the bottom for children walking up to school). Fourth, it is low lying, within reach of existing utilities, and would have little impact on 'green amenity' for local people.
- b) **Bewsley Farm site:** I consider that the area of development land under consideration at Bewsley Farm is much too large, even though at present only 50 houses are proposed. It extends up the hill into good quality farmland which would be lost, and if the whole area were developed in future Coppleshone's infrastructure could not support the scale of development. If Bewsley Farm land is to be approved for development, I consider that approval should be limited to the single field at the southern edge of the western section of the land (not further north than 103100 and not further east than 277000). Up to 50 houses at Bewsley Farm could possibly be an alternative to 48 houses at the Old Abattoir.

However, in my opinion the Bewsley site is less suitable than the Old Abattoir site because access would have to be via existing narrow residential roads (Sunnymead or Bewsley Hill) causing congestion and danger for residents, especially children. It also entails greater loss of good farmland.

- c) **The site adjoining Dulings Meadow:** I consider that the proposed area of development land at Dulings Meadow is also much too large, with up to 118 houses envisaged. It extends into good quality farmland which would be lost, and the scale of the development could not be supported by Coppleshone's infrastructure. If the Dulings site is to be approved for development, I consider that approval should be limited to the single plot at the southern edge of the land under consideration, the land that falls between the A377 and the stream / floodplain. Up to 50 houses here could possibly be an alternative to 50 houses at the Old Abattoir.

However, the Dulings site real disadvantages in comparison with the Old Abattoir site. First, it is significantly further from the railway station, reducing the likelihood of new residents commuting by train and thus avoiding additional congestion on the roads. Second, it involves greater loss of good farmland. Third, it involves greater loss of amenity for the village: we would lose the pleasant green-field walk enjoyed at present by many dogwalkers and others who regularly use the public footpath from Bewsley Farm to the Farm shop. This would be a considerable loss, as Coppleshone is short of green land accessible for amenity purposes. Similarly, the large numbers of walkers who currently enjoy the walk up Bewsley Hill and along the ridge towards New Buildings, with far reaching rural views across to Dartmoor, would lose a significant part of this enjoyment.

Yours faithfully



Caroline Romijn