

COMMENTS ON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

In considering how the area might develop in the next twenty years, the MDDC has to decide *where* economic development might best be located - where it is most likely to succeed - in the existing towns of Tiverton, Crediton and Cullompton, in a new town or in the rural area.

The advantage of the existing towns is that they have a ready-made population with accompanying infrastructure. But if they are not economically vibrant centres more houses, and thus more people, will not of themselves bring more prosperity. If there is not a corresponding increase in jobs we risk building dormitory towns for commuters. This would be unsatisfactory because it would create more traffic congestion on the M5 to Exeter and Taunton and also cause air pollution, which is already a problem in places. It would also be unsustainable in the long run as the growing scarcity of oil and the consequent rise in fuel costs will eventually put the cost of commuting beyond the means of many workpeople. For this reason the aim should be to build houses near where the new jobs will be.

Tiverton

Further expansion of Tiverton is limited by topographic constraints (steep slopes and flood plains) and by the routes of the A361, limiting it to the north, and of the canal to the south. Further, if the TUE goes ahead as planned the town will have an exaggeratedly linear shape, with the Blundells Road as its spine. This has three major drawbacks: (a) at Halberton, where traffic calming measures have already had to be introduced; (b) where it bisects the grounds of Blundell's School, and (c) at Blundells Roundabout, where there is already an emerging problem of air pollution. All these drawbacks will be exacerbated if the proposed development at Hartnoll Farm takes place, as well as the loss of a mini green belt between Tiverton and Halberton.

Crediton

Crediton also has topographical constraints, and long term development will have an undesirable visual impact and add to the present air pollution problem.

Cullompton

Cullompton has the advantage of having a good supply of land for employment and good transport links. It is located beside a motorway junction, and there is also possibility of a new station being opened on the adjacent railway, which would give the town the advantage of being on two national arteries. The new community located east of the M5 would benefit from the services and social amenities of Cullompton and grow organically onto the existing town, to which it would be linked by road and cyclepath.

New Community at Junction 27/Willand

This has the advantage of being located beside a motorway junction, but it is not near a settlement of any size, so there is no readymade population cluster, services or amenities, and the infrastructure would have to be built from scratch. It could function as an outlet for local produce, mainly to tourists, but care would have to be taken that it did not affect trade in Tiverton. The cinema would be more for the benefit of tourists than for the local area. Cullompton and Tiverton residents would find it more convenient to have a cinema in the town if one was needed.

Rural Development

There is scope for some rural development, but it needs to be discreet in size, in keeping with its surroundings. Broadband needs to be available to all areas as soon as possible to help businesses and to enable people to work from home.

From the above considerations I suggest that amongst these five possibilities the development of Cullompton would be the most likely to succeed.



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THE ROLE OF TIVERTON IN MID-DEVON

Tiverton needs to become more important as a centre in Mid-Devon serving the surrounding area and attracting people to it instead of looking outward so much to Exeter, Taunton and Barnstaple. It needs to develop economically and not just grow in the number of houses beyond what is required to meet present needs.

The creation of jobs is a top priority, but as many of these would be in the commercial sector it is difficult for councils to create them directly. However, they could begin by upgrading the level of education and skills in the workforce through the expansion of educational provision.

At present many children leave school after GCSEs as local 6th form provision is limited and they face the expense of travelling to Exeter, Taunton, Barnstaple and Bicton. That is why it is encouraging to see the beginning of a 6th form and an expansion of the range of subjects offered at Petroc. However, that will need to be carried very much further if it is to compete with Richard Huish and Exeter College.

Petroc could expand into offering some of the subjects (for example in land-based knowledge and skills) available at Bicton, and possibly incorporate an equestrian centre.

Tiverton needs to develop as a magnet that draws people in for work (jobs in Education), shopping, services and amenities. This might be encouraged by:

- free car parking
- lower commercial rates
- discounted bus fares at certain times on specific days
- a vastly improved modern bus station
- promoting speciality shops with local produce, arts and crafts and fabrics.
(The selection of fabrics in Heathcoat's factory shop is superior to that in very much larger towns and should be more widely promoted.)
- further promotion of tourist attractions centred round the Museum, the Castle, St Peter's Church and the canal.