

Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013 – 2033

Policy SP 2

Comments relating to the questions posed by the Inspector Nos. 12 to 16

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Best performing site Q12

This question begins from an assumption which I believe to be unjustified: see my comments below. *If* the assumption, that a site in Sampford Peverell is necessary to cater for additional housing resulting from the Policy J 27 allocation is accepted, then, of the proposed sites, that at Higher Town is the best performing. However, I argue that the whole plan is unsound as no consideration is given to other sites which would satisfy the need for such housing in a sound and sustainable manner.

The historic environment Q13

The proposed plan would have a deleterious effect on the historic environment of Sampford Peverell. It is a village which has grown organically at least from Saxon times, (its existence was noted in the Domesday book as the village of Sanforda). It is located on ground which rises steadily from Lower Town to Higher Town, beyond which lies the proposed site. Sampford Peverell is a "small Mid-Devon village"¹ with a lengthy and distinctive cultural heritage. It is a "sustainable, distinctive place ... enjoyed by local people"¹ The erection of a multitude of houses on the proposed site would rise well above the conservation area lying to the south, add considerably to the proportion of new houses in the settlement, and thus would radically alter this ancient area, becoming a permanent blight.

Character and appearance of the area Q14

1 The MDDC *Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report* of July 2013 specifically notes that "Development [of the Higher Town site] would have a significant [*sic*] landscape impact", owing to its character and topography, being probably the highest point in the village. However, this view is largely dismissed in the Local Plan Review (Jan) 2017, although the document admits (p 114) that:

1: MDDC Sustainability Scoping Report July 2013, sec. 1.12

“To a limited degree the landscape settings of Sampford Peverell conservation area and the Grand Western Canal conservation area will also be affected. ... This site occupies a substantial area within a landscape that has evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity, overall a negative and uncertain effect.”

2 The proposed site is also described as being of Grade 2 very good quality agricultural land, which is divorced from the village.

3 To the south of the site the land continues to slope for some 300 or 400 metres to the Grand Western Canal and Country Park, and the local nature reserve. This is a popular tourist spot for walkers, cyclists, and small pleasure boats. Any housing on the proposed site would be visible from the tow path and its impact on the distinctive qualities of Mid Devon's natural landscape would be significant.

4 Housing on this site, with its accompanying road system, would require street lighting. Given its altitude this would, despite the use of modern LED lighting, contribute significantly to light pollution.

5 Under the Local Plan Review the preamble to Policy S13 states that with regard to a number of villages in Mid Devon, including Sampford Peverell, "small-scale housing" would be acceptable. The addition of 60 houses on the proposed site might possibly be low-density but would not be small-scale. Such a description could apply to the "6 to 10 dwellings" referred to in section 2.79 of the review, but not to 60.

Pedestrian accessibility of the site Q15

“The roads surrounding the site have no footpaths and Turnpike is a dangerous road for pedestrians”. Such is the wording in the SHLA Report of September 2013 (p. 134). On the north side is a very narrow country lane with high banks leading into Higher Town and past the Victorian primary school. The lane is used by large modern farm machinery, and when children are being delivered to or collected from the school there is a great amount of traffic. On the south side of the site it would be necessary, if intending to go to into the village, to cross Turnpike to reach the nearest pavement, which begins only after passing the cemetery. To reach the shops, pubs, children's play area, and the village hall, the pedestrian must continue on this path. However, where the road bends past the T-junction for the church and towards the approach to the canal, there is no pavement on either side of the road. Here it is necessary, for safety, to recross the main road and cross the road to the church so as to reach the canal footbridge and the pavement on the north side. The road also

has two difficult bends, which add to the danger of a handicapped person using, for example, a mobility scooter or bicycle.

The tie to Policy J27

Q 16 Even if there is indeed a need to provide sixty houses as a result of development at Junction 27, the proposed site at Higher Town is illogical and blind to proposed development elsewhere. In September 2014 the MDDC Council Cabinet recommended the development of a new settlement of 5000 houses to begin east of Cullompton. There already exist adequate safe road links to that area. Accepting that sixty of these could provide the accommodation required by the J 27 development, then this would avoid the "split development" decried by the Council Cabinet itself. It would also prevent the addition of considerable commuter traffic along the country lane and "dangerous roads" of Sampford Peverell.

Conclusion

The proposals contained in currently revised version of the Mid Devon Local Plan Review give the impression of being a two-dimensional exercise based merely upon maps. They neglect the sloping nature of the village and the position, in terms of altitude, of the proposed site. They largely omit reference to the historic nature of the village. In these respects it overturns the Council's own views as expressed in 2013. The proposals completely contradict the approach outlined in its own *Policy S13* with regard to the number of houses suitable for what it itself regards as a "small village". In a yet further example of overturning its own conclusions of a few years earlier, the proposals ignore the admittedly dangerous nature of the main road through Sampford Peverell, and the fact that there is no complete footpath from the site into the village. These several points therefore render the proposal unsound.

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