

5 April, 2018



Forward Planning
Mid Devon District Council,
Phoenix House,
Phoenix Lane,
Tiverton
EX16 6PP

Dear Sir/Madam,

Representations to the Schedule of Amendments to the Sustainability Appraisal Update 2017

M5 Junction 27 Proposed Leisure and Retail Development

My objection to the above Schedule of Amendments relates in particular to the proposed major development at Junction 27 – see pages 223 and 224.

No amendment has been made to the previous Sustainability Assessment in respect to the following items:-

1. Economic, Social, Environmental – infrastructure

No reference has been made to problems arising at J28 (Cullompton). Dangerous congestion occurs at rush hours in particular, with long tail-backs from the M5 northbound slip road onto the motorway. This is extremely dangerous. No easing of this serious problem will occur until an eastern relief road for Cullompton is built – there is no prospect of this happening. The only alternative for Willand and parts of Cullompton is to use J27 which will no doubt, be congested often if the major development goes ahead.

In addition to the above, when the M5 between J27 and J28 is closed due to an emergency/incident, the strategic route for the M5 is the B3181. It is clear that J27 must remain uncongested to allow the safe flow of southbound traffic to the B3181 through Willand.

2. Social – loss of jobs - It seems clear that there will be a loss of jobs in businesses in the area and particularly in the town centres due to this proposed development. The jobs that might be created at the J27 development would be mainly low paid and seasonal, and may not last after the initial impact of this development. What is needed is real jobs such as Ikea opening in May this year at Exeter creating 200 jobs, and also at Tiverton, Tofu Manufacturer Dragonfly Foods is investing £4.5m in a new factory which is set to create new jobs.

3. Economic, social and environmental – impact on Devon

J27 is where tourists travelling down the M5 enter Devon, the Gateway to Devon. This gateway currently is a rural area, with fields, hills, valleys and villages – a genuinely green and pleasant area which welcomes everyone to Devon. The proposed development would drastically change this aspect on entering mid Devon in particular and lead to congestion at J27. There appears to be no advantage to mid Devon to have this shopping village and leisure facilities at J27. There is already Clarks Shopping Village nearby at Street, and this evolved naturally from the Clarks Shoe Factory and retail outlets. The present proposal at J27 evolves from nowhere, purely for the benefit of the landowners and foreign insurance company, not for the benefit of mid Devon.

4. Social – no Eden Project! Misunderstanding has arisen with local people that another Eden Project will be coming to J27. Nothing could be further from the truth. The misunderstanding has occurred because Tim Smit of the Eden Project was persuaded by the developers to come aboard at a late stage to bolster the chances for this development. Many people will be badly let down.

5. Economic – severe effect on towns The towns of Cullompton and Tiverton are the areas for which the MDDC plan for development in mid Devon, and there is a great need for improvements in these town centres. Will the plans in these towns for shops, upgraded cinema and hotels be put on hold fearing a J27 development? Such an out-of-town retail and leisure development at J27 spells doom for the town centres.

6. Environmental – pollution There will be a major increase in both air and noise pollution in the area, especially from commercial vehicles and cars, and from activities within the development. Visitors will also be subjected to air and noise pollution from the M5 itself. The suggestion of an artificial surfing lake alongside a motorway is cynical. Also the use of power to create the waves and for filtering, will increase this pollution. There could also be a risk of flooding.

7. In conclusion, the proposed development will be at an enormous detrimental cost to the local area and to Devon as a whole. As Ben Bradshaw MP for Exeter said “It is unsustainable”. It will be an eyesore and could well become a white elephant.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Ritchie (Mrs)