

10th April, 2018

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Local Plan Review: Incorporating proposed modifications - Sustainability Update
Incorporating consultant LUC recommendations.

Sustainability Appraisal.

Comments and findings.

This SA assessment was called for by MDDC on advice from a barrister. This was granted by the Inspector. One can only assume that MDDC could not defend the land and housing at J27, because of the many objections to this amendment to the local plan.

At a meeting of Willand Parish Council I asked the elected member for planning and regeneration what advice the barrister had given the council and was told it was 'privilege information.' He was then asked what form and information would be given to the independent consultants. He told me that he did not know.

Throughout the history of the allocation, I have made many statements, my correspondence can be found on their website since November 2013. I still vigorously oppose any development at J27. Indeed, MDDC have opposed this allocation at J27 over many years.

The independent consultants, LUC, have produced this report by assessing the methods used by MDDC, not whether the contents of the evidence is correct or legal. It appears to me this is a disclaimer from LUC. It is stated in paragraphs 1.3 to 1.10 that their report is based only on the information and guidance received from MDDC and therefore their findings does not support development at J27.

All the evidence including the SA report used to justify J27 in the local plan was rejected unanimously by the full council in 2014. The area of J27 was not put in the local plan. How can MDDC now use material, that was previously rejected, to justify J27 in the local plan? It appears LUC were not told about this, as it does not appear in their report.

I am not aware of any meetings where alternative sites to J27 were considered and comparisons made. Why were other developers not considered for this land allocation? Did MDDC put the restriction of tourism and leisure on the land to deter other developers from putting in their ideas for this so called land allocation? Eden Westwood would then have a monopoly. It was a 'closed shop' by Eden Westwood since November 2013. MDDC state they rejected the 96 hectares commercial scheme, in favour of the 71 hectares. I find this very surprising as the distribution area was withdrawn by the developer. This was evident in a press statement at the time and this was supported by the C.E.O. of MDDC in another press statement. At a previous full council meeting an Eden Westwood slide was presented showing the provision of commercial floor space, the agronomy centre, travel hub, designer shopping outlet, themed hotel and an artificial surfing lagoon. All this was encompassed in 61 hectares. The 61 hectare site was never considered anywhere else in Devon.

At the final meeting where MDDC full council approved land at J27 another slide was produced from the Eden Westwood literature which added a further 10 hectares on to the site to circumnavigate planning legislation i.e. If a landowner does not wish to sell his land and, this bisects the area of land required, the planning application will fail. This slide was presented by the head of planning and mirrored exactly Eden Westwood, the developers, manual. Concern was raised about this at the meeting by a number of district councillors and the public. We were told that this was only indicative of a land allocation. Why was this not advertised and offered to other developers?

In the SA report on the facilities at J27, there is now no mention of the surfing lagoon or themed hotel. Is the reason for their exclusion to reduce the negative impact of the site in the table of calculations?

MDDC's evidence regarding disaggregation and location of J27.

I believe that this evidence is flawed. They quote Rushden Lakes shopping outlet, but this cannot be used as a comparison to the J27 green field site. This shopping outlet was added to the existing Nene Wetlands Visitor Centre, which is within walking distance of Rushden city centre, having a population of 28,272.

Conclusion.

In my opinion, the full council have not been given the complete information for decisions to be taken. There appears a lack of independent evidence, particularly to land allocation at J27. It just seems to be based on information and suggestions supplied by Eden Westwood. Too many decisions about the land allocation at J27 are being made between Eden Westwood and MDDC planning department, lacking consultation with elected members and the general public.

After all these years, Eden Westwood have never put in a planning application for this site from their press announcement in November 2013 to the present day. One questions whether they are hanging on to the coat tails of MDDC to get the land allocation for them. They know public opinion is against them at J27. Their ideas for the site are both unsound and unsustainable.

I still wish to address the Inspector on various issues if I am permitted.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr. Keith Grantham