

**Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013 – 2033**

**Proposed Submission (incorporating proposed modifications)  
Examination in Public**

**Hearing 1:  
Policy J27  
(20/09/2018)**

**Parties: Mid Devon District Council  
Aviva Life and Pensions UK Ltd  
The Eden Project**

**Date: September 2018**

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**SIGNATURES**

Signature



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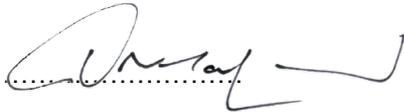
On behalf of Mid Devon District Council

Signature

Tony Clements  
[Tony Clements \(Sep 13, 2018\)](#)

On behalf of Aviva Life and Pensions UK Limited

Signature



On behalf of The Eden Project

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This joint statement of common ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC), Aviva Life and Pensions UK Ltd (ALP) and The Eden Project (Eden) in relation to the Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013-2033 Proposed Submission (incorporating proposed modifications) Examination (MDLPR). It is prepared to assist the Inspector in the context of the preliminary hearings taking place on 20 and 21 September 2018 relating to Hearing 1: Policy J27: Land at Junction 27 of the M5 Motorway.
- 1.2 This SoCG supplements and should be read in conjunction with the Statement of Common Ground dated August 2017 prepared by MDDC, FLL (now ALP) and Eden, which specifically addresses Issues 1, 5, 6 and 7 of the Inspector's Matters and Issues (ID02).
- 1.3 This SoCG relates specifically to Policy J.27 with particular reference to:
- Overall policy objectives;
  - Agronomy Visitor Centre (9 ha); and
  - Site phasing and delivery.
- 1.4 It is intended to assist the Inspector during the Examination.
- 1.5 Unless explicitly stated otherwise this statement sets out matters of agreement between MDDC, ALP and Eden.

## 2 POLICY OBJECTIVES

### Policy J27 – Land at Junction 27 - Policy Wording

2.1 The policy wording for land at Junction 27 states:

*A site of approximately 71 hectares adjoining the south bound carriageway of the M5 motorway, adjacent to junction 27 is identified for major development. The land, which lies to the south of the A38, is allocated for the provision of a major high quality regional tourism, leisure and retail attraction supported by ancillary roadside services and supporting infrastructure including a pedestrian bridge across the M5 motorway linking the site to Tiverton Parkway railway station.*

*The site provides a prime location for delivery of a major leisure destination themed around agriculture and the agri-economy; the regional environment and tourism; outdoor land and water-based adventure activities and outlet-retailing. The site provides a major opportunity to deliver a unique leisure destination at the gateway to Devon and Cornwall which should be realised as a single cohesive and comprehensively masterplanned visitor attraction.*

- *The allocation makes provision for the following elements:*
- *Travel Hub (7ha) – Motorway/roadside services; electric car hub; hotel.*
- *Agronomy Visitor Centre (9ha) – exhibition space and hall, gallery; research and education space; regional visitor centre and hotel. The Agronomy centre will include up to 1,000 square metres of ancillary retail.*
- *Outdoor Adventure Zone (6ha) – Surf lake/lagoon; beach; high ropes adventure area.*
- *Outlet Shopping Village (6ha) - Designer outlet shopping centre retailing controlled goods comprising discontinued/end-of-range lines, seconds and surplus/sample stock. The Outlet Shopping Village to include up to 14,000 square metres of controlled comparison goods and up to 2,000 square metres of A3 uses.*

*The development is subject to the following:*

- a) Provision of supporting access roads, parking and infrastructure/landscaping (43ha);*
- b) Provision of transport improvements to ensure appropriate accessibility for all modes, including new or improved access and egress onto the M5 motorway and pedestrian and cycling links across the motorway to Tiverton Parkway Railway Station;*
- c) Environmental protection and enhancement including noise mitigation;*
- d) A comprehensive phasing programme to ensure the tourist and leisure provisions are delivered at the same time as the retail and service elements of the development; and*

***e) Prior to the approval of any planning permission for the site any required mitigation measures for the Culm Grasslands Special Area of Conservation shall be identified and agreed together with a time-scale for their provision and a mechanism for their maintenance.***

***Development of the site should be brought forward in accordance with the terms of a detailed development brief, comprehensive masterplanning including at least two stages of public consultation and adoption of the Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document before any planning application for any part of the site is determined.***

### **Policy J27 – Objectives**

- 2.2 It is agreed by the parties that the principal objective behind the draft policy is to assist in the delivery of a ‘step-change’ in the tourism and leisure offer that is available within the District, an ambition that is recognised within the evidence base supporting the MDLPR. This objective is an important component of the Council’s wider corporate ambitions, which are motivated by a desire to maximise the opportunity offered by major transport arteries that run through the district in the form of the M5 motorway and the mainline rail link (which serves national destinations including London, Bristol and Exeter) for generating inward investment and revenue generation for the District from tourism.
- 2.3 The intent behind the draft policy as worded reflects both the spatial understanding and awareness of the potential of this site, and encapsulates the vision that is held locally and regionally for its success. Various technical works evidence the need, demand and capacity for such an allocation (as summarised in the SoCG in respect of Issues 1, 5, 6 and 7 dated August 2017), but none of this captures the sentiment that sits behind it.
- 2.4 While planners talk about ‘effective transport arteries’ and ‘demand capacity’, elected members talk of tapping ‘rivers of gold’ and council meetings hear pleadings from all sides for ambition, aspiration and a dynamic and exciting vision for the future. It is important to understand that, as a clear opportunity site, the land around junction 27 has been promoted for a range of uses over the years – none of which has thus far been aligned with the planning or visionary approach of the Local Plan at that time. With the draft policy as worded, the alignment of potential, opportunity, need, viability, ambition and delivery have come together in a statement that describes what this allocation could be in relation to the Local Plan, the sense of place, and its wider surroundings.
- 2.5 Within the wider economic and tourism agenda, the draft policy not only adheres to and accords with wider policy objectives (district, county, sub-region, region) , it also seeks to maximise the economic potential offered by a major tourism destination and to spread these across the wider region. With Mid Devon having clear capacity to develop its tourism potential as a district, what is

clear is that there is identifiable headroom in capacity at a county level, as well as an increasing impetus for self-sustaining economic vibrancy in the context of Brexit. It is no coincidence that there has been a national focus on delivering a 'Golden Legacy' for inbound tourism<sup>1</sup>, nor that tourism represents a significant growth prospect with 2016 setting records for visits and spend<sup>2</sup>. However, against this backdrop tourism visits to Devon are falling, with spend 20% below the highs of 2013<sup>3</sup>, indicating a need to address both the supply and quality of tourism attractions within the County, something the draft policy sets out to achieve.

2.6 For a tourism destination (outside London) to be of significance, and attractive, it is critical to appreciate that 81% of visitor trips to England (from international locations) include London in their itinerary<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, it is highly important that new visitor destinations which aim to appeal to tourists across the national and international spectrum benefit from excellent access to both the strategic road network and mainline rail service with established connections to London. The allocation site benefits from an unrivalled location in the region with these factors in mind.

2.7 The Productivity Strategy for the 'Heart of the South West (covering Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay) was adopted in March 2018, and encapsulates the ambition of doubling the size of the area's economy over the next 20 years. It recognises that:

*"Our quality of life attracts people to live, learn and work here. We will support new ways of working to nurture new businesses and new sectors as well as making the most of our traditional coastal and rural strengths in food and drink production, agri-tech and tourism"<sup>5</sup>.*

2.8 Bearing in mind the positioning of this allocation as meeting needs that go beyond those of the district, and the ambition that is envisaged for it, it is notable that the productivity strategy specifically highlights the use of this location as one that should be powering our economic growth and productivity. It confirms that:

*"As a region, we have identified a high growth corridor that broadly tracks the A38/M5 spine, and which links to a number of our golden opportunities. Supporting our places to grow at the pace of their ambition, and ensuring that we capitalise on our golden opportunities, will drive transformational growth that benefits the whole region"<sup>6</sup>.*

2.9 Supporting places to grow at the pace of their ambition: this is what the draft policy sets the context for. Nothing less than the ambition of its community, described as a spatial framework, to deliver on its vision. An ambition recognised by (amongst others) the South West Business Council (see **Appendix A**).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/Britain\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/Britain_Strategy.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.visitbritain.org/nation-region-county-data>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.visitbritain.org/nation-region-county-data>

<sup>4</sup> The role of product in driving regional spread, 2016, Visit England ([https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/visit\\_britain\\_lb\\_product\\_report\\_fv.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/visit_britain_lb_product_report_fv.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Full suite of committee papers available at: <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=357&MId=628&Ver=4>

<sup>6</sup> HotSW Productivity Strategy, 2018, p.8 available at: <https://heartofswlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/HeartoftheSouthWestProductivityStrategy.pdf>

- 2.10 The Policy aims to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive multi-faceted tourism and leisure destination adjacent to the motorway junction and in close proximity to the mainline station. The Policy comprises a suite of complementary uses that together will appeal to a wide sector of the tourism and leisure market and which are deliverable as a combined proposition focussed on agriculture and food production.
- 2.11 Devon (and Mid Devon in particular) is home to many different types of agriculture and is widely known for its productive fields and coastlines. The issues of climate change, soil degradation, food security and food safety, to name just a few, are global issues, that are borderless. It is, therefore, self-evident why Britain (as a leading force behind modern day agricultural methods) should lead the charge in pioneering another demonstration. Devon – as the home of British farming – should be the location of any such demonstration and where better than Mid Devon.
- 2.12 Not only does Mid Devon have an opportunity to be at the heart of these new developments; it also has the opportunity to address and correct a notion that it is simply a bypass to the rest of Devon and Cornwall. The allocation of land at Junction 27 offers a unique opportunity: To support the creation of a visitor attraction that will draw from Devon’s rich and productive landscape to stimulate new tourism, which will in turn lead to the sustainable growth that is required in the area.
- 2.13 The draft policy does not relate specifically to a single developer or operator. Instead the multi-faceted nature of the offer seeks to trade on a range of factors that have redolence both for the region and for the type of attraction that is being sought: namely a cohesive scheme that will appeal across ages, abilities and interests; temporally and geographically. MDDC, Eden and ALP support the ambition contained within Policy J27 and the objective of delivering a step-change in the tourism economy in Mid Devon. The parties agree that Policy J27 is operator/developer neutral and is not dependent on the involvement of a specific promoter. However, it is also agreed in principle that the aspirations contained within the policy criteria would be capable of being met in the event that the Eden Project is involved in the delivery of development at J.27 as anticipated and as set out in this SoCG. This would be achieved in part by Eden’s participation in the delivery of a comprehensive scheme pursuant to the allocation, which would help to facilitate achievement of the Council’s ambitions in respect of growing the tourist economy. Further information in this respect is set out below. It is agreed by the parties that this does not predetermine or prejudice the determination of any future application made pursuant to Policy J.27 that the Local Planning Authority may receive, submitted on behalf of any party.

#### **Eden’s Vision**

- 2.14 Eden schemes take some of the vast and interconnected challenges that the world is facing and turns them into accessible and simple stories of hope for millions of people – this is Eden’s artistry.

Eden tells the story of the jeopardy in how we live on the planet today but with a light touch. This is the creative tension that makes the Eden brand. It is also at the heart of Eden's attraction to date and the potential within the emerging proposals for Land at Junction 27. Eden is an educational charity based in the UK: its is a mission-driven, non-profit organisation and character is expressed in the following ways:

- **Eden want people to have a revelation about the natural world when they come to an Eden Project:** Eden's task is to illuminate, to enlighten, to wake up millions of people - to the wonder and the jeopardy and to our place in the natural world. Most of the education that Eden offers is not educational with a capital 'e', but to its core, the whole enterprise is educational.
- **Eden is for everyone:** Eden is not just for the experts; the aim is to engage everyone - and make it possible for everyone to feel they have a role to play in helping us live in better harmony with the planet and one another.
- **An encounter with the Eden Project should be an experience:** dramatic and immersive, fun and engaging.
- **Eden wants to be a beacon of hope:** giving people reasons to believe that together we can turn things around and make the difference that the world needs and people want.
- **Eden wants to be uplifting:** celebrating the natural world and the creativity of people, inspiring wonder and lifting people's spirits, giving people a sense of the possibilities ahead.
- **Eden show that it's achievable:** a platform for others who are making change possible, and a catalyst to for many others to take action.

2.15 The Eden Project in Cornwall arose out of a site that, in 1996, was contaminated, derelict and consumed by humans and was a provocation and demonstrator project to show what humans could do, if they just put their minds to it. The focus had been the natural world and people and to demonstrate humankind's dependence on plants. For many years, Eden has wished to develop a project that focuses attention on the critical issues facing both farmers and consumers today (and indeed for the future).

2.16 Many of the challenges over the coming century will be defined by food and its effects on the health of people and planet: of how it is grown, processed and consumed. The human population has transformed the face of the Earth with agriculture, and in doing so has left a legacy of degraded soils, decreasing biodiversity and challenges to human well-being. In the coming decades there will have another 4 billion mouths to feed. Yet with rising incomes, people seek greater pleasures, which largely comes from a changing diet in quality and quantity. Food is not just survival, but is also enjoyment.

- 2.17 It is therefore in Mid Devon – the home of Britain’s agriculture – that Eden looks to explore food and agriculture in all of its glory; taking visitors not just on a journey from field to plate, but through all the senses, emotions and memory to show that an appreciation of agriculture can arm us with the skills to look at the whole world anew, and in doing so engage with the challenges and opportunities that the future holds.
- 2.18 Eden’s global ambitions are such that its projects become part of a network of sites across the world – each focussed on different aspects of global issues. Of note are the sites in China where there is focus on the science of soil (in Yan’An), water (in Qingdao) and the latest site under development in Chengdu, Sichuan (a city of 20 million and province of more than 80 million people). This final site has been under development for four years and will focus entirely on food, food security and food safety – given Sichuan’s position as the most famous and loved Chinese food style. The development of Land at Junction 27 offers Mid Devon as a location an opportunity to partner in this network and to benefit from new educational, scientific and tourist partnerships. This also means that the site will never stand still – constantly refreshing its content and ensuring that visitors return time and time again.

#### **Land at Junction 27: A Shared Vision**

- 2.19 ALP in partnership with the Eden Project is seeking to deliver this vision through a truly exceptional leisure, tourism and education led scheme on land adjoining Junction 27 of the M5 Motorway in Mid Devon. At its core is the vision is to promote Devon food, farming and life and, in so doing, generate economic, environmental, educational and social benefits for the entire region. This is a vision shared by the Council and, as confirmed above, it is agreed between the parties that Eden would, through involvement with delivery of a comprehensive scheme pursuant to the allocation, help to facilitate achievement of the Council’s ambitions in respect of growing the tourist economy.
- 2.20 The multi-faceted development will comprise a destination showcasing Devon life with specific emphasis on agriculture, horticulture, leisure and food. The Agronomy Visitor Centre, an iconic structure and associated landscaped curtilage, will form the heartbeat of the scheme that will also include a Travel Hub (motorway/roadside services; electric car hub; hotel); Outdoor Adventure Zone (Surf lake/lagoon; beach; high ropes adventure area); and Outlet Shopping Village.
- 2.21 As set out above, the allocation is not operator or scheme specific but is intended to provide a framework that facilitates the achievement of the Council’s ambitions in respect of growing the tourist economy.
- 2.22 The following section describes what the Agronomy Visitor Centre (9ha) could comprise within the Policy framework. Information relating to other components of the policy (including the synergy between them) is set out in the SoCG relating to Issues 1, 5, 6 and 7 (August 2017).

### **3 AGRONOMY VISITOR CENTRE**

- 3.1 This section describes what could be delivered under the ‘Agronomy Visitor Centre’ component of Policy J27. The description below is intended to explain to the Inspector what the policy could deliver in terms of a tourism experience. While this is not fixed (as the policy is not scheme or operator specific) it is agreed between the parties that its content would align with the Council’s vision for the site.
- 3.2 In accordance with Policy J27, the Agronomy Visitor Centre and the ground immediately surrounding it extends to 9ha and comprises an exhibition space and hall, gallery; research and education space; regional visitor centre, a hotel and up to 1,000 square metres of ancillary retail floorspace.
- 3.3 It is envisaged that the Agronomy Visitor Centre will comprise a landmark building surrounded by its curtilage and split into distinct zones, each of which will seek to educate, through entertainment, on the topics of food and farming – and the wider, related issues of environmental custodianship, rural communities, agronomical education and individual wellbeing. The Agronomy Visitor Centre is at the core of the J27 destination.

#### **Exhibition Space and Hall and Gallery**

- 3.4 The exhibition space/ hall and the gallery would be contained within a landmark building and its curtilage. It will be an interactive and experiential educational-led facility showcasing (primarily but not exclusively) Devon agriculture, the food, and drink economy. It will be a flexible, open and evolving space enabling its content to be refreshed ensuring that visitors return to engage in new experiences. The ground immediately surrounding the landmark building offers further flexibility to the function of this zone.
- 3.5 It is envisaged that the centrepiece would be the “Theatre of Food”, which will focus on artisans and food producers utilising purpose-built stations made of sustainable materials such as wood, hemp and glass. Where possible, the raw goods of their craft will grow or be on show beside them. Visitors will be able to wander among them freely, seeing how raw goods are transformed into familiar produce, while learning the stories behind them and getting involved in their preparation. This zone also offers a platform that allows food producers to advertise and sell produce, and for visitors to consume the produce.
- 3.6 Within the exhibition and gallery space it is envisaged that specially commissioned artwork installations will tell more agronomy and food stories – for example bees made of metal will ‘fly’ above as a visual explanation of the vital contribution that industrial bees make to our food sector.

As an evolving space the exhibition space and gallery is inherently flexible to facilitate educational-led showcasing of Devon's agriculture, food and drink economy.

3.7 The exhibition and gallery space will facilitate a network of spaces with interest for all the family combining education, science and play to create a unique space for public engagement. For example exhibits and activities could range from darkly lit fungi rooms to incubation huts and sci-fi food.

3.8 Outside (within the land immediately surrounding the landmark building) activities, courses and trails led by experts will facilitate further education-led experiences. Experts would take visitors on a journey that explores food and agriculture. For example, the role that trees play in producing and protecting food and its critical life-sources.

#### **Research and Education space**

3.9 The research and education space would be contained within the landmark building and the grounds immediately surrounding it. It would act as a gateway to research in food and farming, building upon local education partnerships and organisations. The landmark building would contain purpose built flexible education spaces: for example, multi-functional floorspace that could be used as studios and classrooms by partner businesses and organisations,

3.10 Within the curtilage, the outdoor areas will offer a flexible space that focuses on educating people on the different farming practices.

#### **3.11 Regional Visitor Centre**

3.12 The visitor centre would be contained within the landmark building. It would provide a one stop shop that makes it easy for visitors to obtain information about, and book, experiences and events that interest them in Mid Devon and the region. It will be a celebration of the region's special places and experiences, showcased using high definition screens, projections and displays. The visitor centre would utilise the latest technology to facilitate tourism experiences.

3.13 A "market town embassy" will give local communities such as Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton the opportunity to showcase their best produce and places.

3.14 The visitor centre would include an ancillary shop to sell produce and goods.

#### **Hotel**

3.15 Policy J27 includes provision for a hotel associated with the Agronomy Visitor Centre. This would act as a valuable incentive to encourage visitors to break their journeys for an overnight stay and be a destination for short breaks. The site's proximity to Tiverton Parkway will add to its attraction.

#### **4 PHASING/ DELIVERY**

- 4.1 The SoCG relating to Issues 1, 5, 6 and 7 explains in detail the ‘synergy’ between the policy components set out under Policy J27, including reasons why a retail component in the form of an OSV supports the delivery (in financial viability terms) of the allocation in the plan period. The information below is intended to supplement the SoCG dated August 2017.
- 4.2 It is agreed between the parties that there are a number of potential and appropriate mechanisms that would be available to help secure the comprehensive delivery of development pursuant to Policy J27 (including those components that are potentially unviable as a standalone proposition). The parties also agree that the evidence prepared to support the policy objectives is reasonable and proportionate to the preparation of Local Plan policy. It is agreed that as a matter of principle the information contained within the evidence base supporting the Local Plan is not the only means by which delivery of the development could be achieved. For the purposes of this agreement the parties acknowledge and accept that a fundamental principle of Policy J.27 is that the individual policy components are delivered in accordance with an agreed comprehensive phasing programme that will guarantee that all aspects of the visitor attraction are provided in accordance with the provisions of the Local Plan.
- 4.3 It is agreed that ALP, as the current principal scheme promoter, would undertake an overarching role in co-ordinating delivery of development pursuant to Policy J.27. However it is accepted that the Policy provisions do not necessarily require the involvement of a single developer and that ALP would not, therefore need to be the sole developer or investor to satisfy the requirements of the policy. An example of a development model that would support comprehensive development would involve the cross-funding of scheme elements through the subsidisation of land and building costs across the development as a whole, with the most commercially viable components of the scheme supporting the less commercially viable parts. This model would be based on a principal developer/investor entering into partnerships with operators who would agree terms on the basis of commercial and planning synergies between the various development components. Planning controls deployed through legal agreements and restrictive conditions could be used to ensure that the future phasing of development is controlled to achieve the Council’s planning and wider corporate objectives. At this early stage it is not appropriate to be unduly prescriptive on the basis that the Policy is required to cater for a twenty-year plan-period and is not scheme or operator specific. It is agreed that the viability evidence supporting the Local Plan confirms that a potential mechanism for delivery of a scheme pursuant to the policy exists. It demonstrates overall viability in accordance with the planning and corporate objectives that underpin the allocation
- 4.4 Eden has been working with ALP and its predecessors for over three years and significant trust has built up through the founding of the partnership. Eden is working through its business model using

internal expertise and external advisors and drawing upon unrivalled knowledge of trends seen in Cornwall over the past 17 years. The model is necessarily evolving as the scheme develops and detail emerges. Eden agrees that comprehensive delivery is a fundamental policy objective and is basing its business model on a series of assumptions that are reflected within the evidence base underpinning the Local Plan, which includes the provision of land on which the agronomy centre would be constructed at low or zero cost.

- 4.5 It is agreed by all parties that, in accordance with the criteria set out within Policy J27, development of the land at junction 27 should occur on a comprehensive basis in accordance with an agreed phasing programme that will be enforceable through planning conditions and / or planning obligations. It is also agreed that the justification for and objectives behind the Policy rest upon the delivery of a comprehensive and multi-component tourist and leisure attraction, which should be delivered as a comprehensive scheme. The viability appraisal exercise demonstrates on a reasonable and proportionate basis that a scheme (as illustrated within the appraisal) delivered pursuant to the terms of the policy would be viable, as a consequence of which the Policy is effective. It is agreed by the parties that alternative delivery mechanisms may be appropriate within the plan-period such that it is not appropriate to fix any particular development model through the terms of the policy. It is also agreed that while flexibility should be retained in this respect it is appropriate and necessary to ensure that the comprehensive nature of any scheme delivered pursuant to the policy and the phasing of delivery are matters that should properly be controlled through the policy and that it is appropriate to impose policy provisions that will achieve such objectives.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 This SoCG has been prepared by MDDC, ALP and Eden in the context of the preliminary hearings taking place on 20 and 21 September 2018 relating to Hearing 1: Policy J27: Land at Junction 27 of the M5 Motorway.
- 5.2 This SoCG describes in more detail the objectives informing the draft policy, the function of the Agronomy Visitor Centre, and sets out how the scheme can be phased and controlled to comprehensively deliver components of the scheme.
- 5.3 It should be read in conjunction with the Statement of Common Ground dated August 2017 prepared by MDDC, FLL (now ALP) and Eden, which specifically addresses Issues 1, 5, 6 and 7 of the Inspector's Matters and Issues.

APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM SOUTH WEST BUSINESS COUNCIL DATED 29 AUGUST 2018

Stephen Walford  
**Chief Executive & Director of Growth**  
Mid Devon District Council  
Phoenix House  
Phoenix Lane  
Tiverton  
EX16 6PP

29<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Dear Mr Walford

**Eden Westwood Junction 27 Development**

On behalf of our business network I am authorised to write to you in support of this project.

We are aware that there is a forthcoming examination in public. We would wish for our views to be communicated to the Inspector. If it was felt appropriate we would be happy to attend the event to provide additional context for our reasons to support this project.

We have examined the general policy framework and have routinely been involved in discussions both locally and regionally regarding the strategic importance of Junction 27. This has included many of the key stakeholders, such as the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and Devon County Council. It is self-evident that this is one of the few strategic links on the arterial network which does not yet make a broader contribution to the regional and local economy.

We believe that there is a compelling case for promoting development in this location. It is a principal gateway to the far South West and as such provides a “showcase” opportunity.

A powerful part of this current initiative is the involvement of two major participants being Aviva and the Eden Project.

Aviva are a tried and tested institution with a significant track record in delivering projects of this type and being able to commit sufficient resources to ensure satisfactory completion. In our experience they are also able to bring a high degree of innovation to their schemes. We have knowledge of some of their design capabilities and their approach to the challenges of the digital era, the need to operate in conjunction with the natural environment and crucially their ability to respect and interact with the local community. All key factors in ensuring that this will be a long-term success.

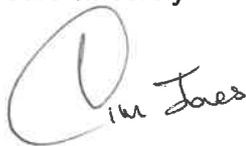
The involvement of the Eden project is of course an exceptional opportunity. Here again, we have a long-standing relationship with their team and work on a number of initiatives with them. It is unnecessary to sing their praises too highly, however, they are a genuine global brand and a destination in their own right. Their ability to enhance this location and in so doing provide a significant increment to the sub regional economy is without doubt an achievable outcome.

Our business council is always seeking to achieve as large an economic footprint as possible from new investment. This project represents a textbook case for this. Whilst the direct employment, both during construction and operation, will generate high quality employment it is also clear that the indirect benefits through an integrated supply chain will probably double the real time impact and contribution to regional GDP.

In addition to this supportive letter it would be our intention to commit to a work programme with the applicant to ensure that as many of these indirect benefits as possible can be planned for. Most immediately we would hope to establish an agenda around skills. We would also wish to ensure that as many local and regional suppliers as possible were able to prepare for the procurement exercise. We have been involved in the supply chain arrangements for Hinkley and understand how this concept can be optimised with a series of tiered contractors. We also envisage that the geographic scale of impact, if carefully managed, would allow participation with many community bodies. The North Devon Biosphere would be a good example of this. There are also a number of digital initiatives which could be directly aligned with the programme. We also see potential engagement with a number of social enterprise bodies including, for example, those dealing with key worker and affordable housing.

We would be delighted to work closely with your team if this project proves to be successful. We would also be happy to expand upon some of the above text if either you or the Inspector require more detail.

Yours sincerely



**Tim Jones**  
**Chairman**