

To Mid Devon District Council

I have given a great deal of thought to what I heard at the recent Preliminary Hearings and having done so, I am content that the Examination should continue to Main Hearings and I will now be working on a series of Matters and Issues with a view to making these available in early December 2018. At this stage, I expect the Main Hearings to occupy 8 sitting days, over two consecutive weeks, if possible.

There are some preliminary conclusions that it might be useful to share, at this stage. In terms of Policy J27, I am obviously conscious of advice in (the previous version of) the Framework that Plans should be aspirational but realistic. In that context, I see no 'in principle' difficulty with the allocation. Moreover, from what I heard, it seems that a development of the nature proposed (or something broadly similar) could take place without any significant adverse impacts on the economic, social, or environmental dimensions of sustainable development. That said, bearing in mind the nature of the evidence base, I have some reservations about the detailed and specific nature of the policy as drafted, and the way it seems to be directed at a particular scheme, rather than more generally at a tourism-based development. This may have the effect of preventing other schemes, that take a different approach to the site, or the mix of uses on it, coming forward. I propose therefore to address this point, and the precise wording of the policy, in one of Main Hearings.

In terms of Policy SP2, I recognise the strong feelings it has generated amongst the local community. Nevertheless, and bearing in mind that such exercises inevitably involve matters of judgment, I do not share the view, expressed by some, that the process by which the site was selected over others was flawed. In particular, I am content that the Council's conclusion that development of the site proposed for allocation could take place with very little or no harmful impact on the setting or the significance of the Grand Western Canal Conservation Area is not an unreasonable one. There are some aspects of the detailed wording of the policy that I will want to return to in one of the Main Hearings.

On the basis of the useful discussion, and contributions made by the EA, the allocation of the Policy TIV16 site is soundly based, and there is no need for a tie within it to Policy J27.

It would be helpful if the Council could suggest some potential dates for the Main Hearings, based on what I have set out above.

Yours faithfully

*Paul Griffiths*

Inspector

29 October 2018