



MID DEVON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2013 – 2033

Proposed Submission (incorporating proposed modifications) Examination

Inspector: Paul Griffiths BSc (Hons) BArch IHBC

Main Hearings - Hearing 2: Friday 15th February 2019

Matters and Issues

**Strategy and Site Allocations: Tiverton and
Cullompton**

Statement of Mid Devon District Council

ISSUE 3

Is the approach to Cullompton in Draft Policy S11 a reasonable one?

1.0 **ISSUE 3 - Is the approach to Cullompton in Draft Policy S11 a reasonable one?**

- 1.1 This paper sets out Mid Devon's Local Plan Review policies in relation to the Cullompton. (SD01) The Local Plan Review is an important delivery mechanism for the Council's Corporate Plan, which seeks to improve and regenerate town centres, facilitate the housing growth that Mid Devon needs (including affordable homes), facilitate business development and growth and enhance the built environment
- 1.2 Cullompton is situated 11 miles north of Exeter and about 20 miles south west of Taunton. The M5 motorway, which runs to the east of the town, links Exeter, Cullompton and Taunton. The B3181 runs through the centre of the Town and also links Cullompton with Exeter, Willand and via the A38 to Wellington. Cullompton is also situated on the mainline railway which links London Paddington and Plymouth and more locally Bristol and Exeter. The station at Cullompton was removed many years ago, but the ambition and desire to re-open a station provides an ideal opportunity for sustainable transport links to Exeter, Taunton, Wellington, Bristol and Plymouth.
- 1.3 Being situated adjacent to the M5 and the mainline railway provides Cullompton with a unique locational opportunity to develop a sustainable community of the future. Cullompton already benefits from regular bus services to Exeter and Tiverton. Cullompton's situation on the strategic road/rail network, its close proximity to Exeter and Taunton and the availability of land for development make it a very suitable location for long term growth.
- 1.4 **Planning Policy Context -History**
- 1.5 Within the Council's adopted Core Strategy 2007 [LDO01], Tiverton was identified as the main location for new housing and employment development within the district, reflecting its size, level of economic concentration, level of social and commercial services and public transport provision. The Inspector at that time agreed with this approach and concluded that it was reasonable to allocate about half of the proposed development to the town. The Core Strategy Inspector's Report [ED01] also noted that *'in terms of physical constraints there are fairly tight limitations to development to the south and west. To the north the North Devon Link Road provides a strong barrier, breaching of which would be a significant departure from previous approaches.*
- 1.6 The Inspector noted the main opportunity to deliver the scale of new development proposed was to the east of the town. The Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document (AIDPD) [LDO02] implemented the Core Strategy through significant allocations of land for development and infrastructure to the east of Tiverton.
- 1.7 The Local Plan Review 2017 is to supersede;
- The Core Strategy 2007
 - The Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2011, and
 - Local Plan Part 3 Development Management Policies 2013,
- 1.8 The Local Plan Review Options Consultation Document, January 2014 (OCP01), indicated the Council's strategic options for development and the sites that could be allocated for

development having regard to the constraints that had been previously identified in Tiverton and Crediton. The document was subject to an eight week consultation period running from 24th January to 24th March 2014.

- 1.9 At the options consultation stage of the Local Plan Review, in 2014, the Council identified, having regard to the identified constraints, two strategic policy options for how development might be distributed across the district.
- To continue with the then current town centred approach, option 1 –town focus, or
 - Combine this with a new settlement later in the plan period, option 2 – new community.
- 1.10 Two sites were identified for potential new communities, Option 2a - North of Willand, and Option 2b East of Cullompton.
- 1.11 The Council received 1,201 representations in response to the consultation (OCP02). The consultations showed significant opposition to further housing development in Tiverton and to significant development in the villages. There was a majority of opposition to development north of Willand for commercial and housing development and overall support for the development of a strategic housing site to the east of Cullompton.
- 1.12 Following the close of the consultation extensive work was undertaken to further develop the Local Plan review and determine which of the suggested strategic options should be selected. Prime amongst this work was a consideration by the County Council of the likely traffic impacts of the two potential new settlements. That work (ENV12) established that the creation of a new motorway junction to the south of Cullompton with south facing slips only was broadly feasible. Highways England indicated that further detailed design work would be required and a detailed strategic case will need to be made for a new junction before they can support the proposal but they have not rejected the possibility of a new junction at this stage.
- 1.13 A key determinant was the practical availability of land to meet the chosen approach. In the case of Crediton only limited amounts of land were practically deliverable as housing sites so the capacity for Crediton to play its part in a town centred approach was very limited. In the case of Tiverton land to the north of the A361 had not been made available for development by the landowner and topography meant that viable housing sites were in short supply to the west and south of the town. That left expanding the town further to the east beyond existing commitments as the only option for further significant development which also meant that Tiverton had limited potential to deliver its part in further significant housing growth. The Council determined that in order to meet the future need for housing a significant proportion of housing would need to be located in Cullompton, even if the approach had remained town centred.
- 1.14 Cullompton does not suffer from the topographical limitations that affect Crediton and Tiverton. It has significant amounts of land being suitable and available for development, as evidenced by the site suggested for development to the east of Cullompton. It also has the

potential to increase its sustainable transport connections by the future development of a new railway station and already has allocated employment sites with suitable sites for further expansion of employment. In comparison the other potential new community site to the north of Willand was not located next to an existing town and there were only limited commercial development opportunities at the time. In sustainability terms therefore the new settlement option at Cullompton was superior in sustainability terms and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning should focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable. This approach cannot apply to the villages in Mid Devon as they do not possess the facilities, population base, infrastructure and services that a town has.

- 1.15 The site east of Cullompton was chosen as the strategic housing site, which together with the previously allocated North West Urban Extension site, ensured a significant proportion of Mid Devon Housing would be located in and around Cullompton.
- 1.16 The role of Cullompton in meeting the district's long term development needs is central to the Local Plan Review's strategy. While allocating the largest housing provision in Cullompton is a departure from the historic planning strategy for Mid Devon of focusing the majority of development in Tiverton, sufficient suitable land has become increasingly scarce in Tiverton whereas land is readily available in Cullompton meaning the expansion of Cullompton is achievable and supported by the local community as endorsed at the options stage. Additionally Cullompton's location on the road and rail network makes it sustainable in the long term
- 1.17 Planning policy advises that patterns of growth should be actively managed to make the fullest opportunity to use public transport, walking and cycling and significant development should be focused in locations which can be made more sustainable.
- 1.18 On 2nd January 2017, the Government announced plans for a number of new Garden Villages and Towns across the country, including Culm Garden Village. These new settlements are to provide a modern take on the traditional Garden Cities movement that has its roots in the late 19th Century. Garden villages are meant to be different. They are new communities rather than just housing developments on the edge of existing communities and are designed around a number of key principles. For the 21st Century, Garden Villages continue to focus on providing excellent access to services and jobs within a healthy, well connected and green environment.
- 1.19 The Government has confirmed garden village status for land to the east of the M5 motorway at Cullompton. The long term plans for the garden village are to deliver up to 5,000 new homes, as well as employment, shops, schools, healthcare facilities and leisure opportunities including the potential for new sports facilities and country park. The garden village will help to deliver M5 J28 motorway improvements and the long-awaited town centre relief road, and will provide benefits in terms of natural flood management. There is also an ambition to re-open Cullompton railway station and improve bus transport.

- 1.20 Part of the garden village is allocated for development under the Mid Devon Local Plan Review (1,750 houses to 2033). However, the wider ambition is to create a new community of up to 5,000 houses and the remainder of the land will need to be allocated in future plans – potentially through the emerging Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and will be subject to extensive public consultation throughout the creation of the proposals
- 1.21 Policy S11 for the reasons set out above is reasonable and rational and is supported by the local community demonstrated through their own neighbourhood plan. The expansion of Cullopmtton will also help address some of the longer term infrastructure deficiencies which are unlikely to be addressed in the medium term without the benefit of long term sustainable development.
- 1.22 The Council consider the approach to Cullopmtton set out in Policy S11 is a reasonable one for the reasons set out above.