



**MID DEVON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2013 – 2033**

Proposed Submission (incorporating proposed modifications) Examination

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**Main Hearings - Hearing 1: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**Matters and Issues**

**Vision, Spatial and Development Strategy, and  
Strategic Policies**

**Statement of Mid Devon District Council**

**ISSUE 9      Do Draft Policies S7 go far enough to protect the town centres identified therein?**

**9) Do Draft Policies S7 go far enough to protect the town centres identified therein?**

- 9.1 Policy S7 seeks to secure the sustainability of Mid Devon’s market towns, focussing development within town centres. It is justified and effective in protecting the town centres identified within the policy.
- 9.2 The policy sets out the strategic framework for Mid Devon’s three town centres at Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. It promotes positive measures of enhancement and regeneration, promotes a mix of town centre uses that would contribute to vitality and viability and establishes the requirement for a sequential and impact test for new retail, leisure, office and other town centre uses outside the town centres, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). Indeed, the primary policy mechanisms for the protection of town centres are set out within Policies DM14 and DM15. The sequential and impact test is therefore considered in greater detail within the Council’s hearing statement for Hearing 4 – Matters 12 and 13.
- 9.3 The policy criteria within S7 were informed and evidenced by the Mid Devon Retail Study 2012 [ECO03]. Principally, this concluded that:
- Tiverton is a healthy town centre which is a key asset to the retail hierarchy in Mid Devon. Whilst the Tesco store soaked up some capacity, there remains a qualitative

and quantitative need for additional comparison goods floorspace. It was recommended that the focus for this should be within the Phoenix Lane area.

- Cullompton has experienced significant change and although vacancy rates have reduced in recent years, they remain high and should be an area of focus for the Council going forwards. There is also a need to focus on improving the physical environment within the centre so that the overall attractiveness can be improved.
- Crediton has also experienced significant change although this has not affected convenience goods within the town centre. Vacancies rates have also been improving over time. As is the case for Cullompton, the study recommends that the focus should be on the existing stock of commercial property within the town centre.

- 9.4 In light of these findings, the policy promotes positive management of town centres, ensuring that economic regeneration and heritage conservation reinforce each other. Having regard to the conclusions of the Retail Study for Tiverton, one town centre allocation is proposed within the Local Plan Review **[SD01]**, at Phoenix Lane, Tiverton. This provides a site of 1.4 ha for redevelopment as a high quality, leisure, shopping and residential area with accessible public space. With regards to Crediton and Cullompton the policy promotes positive measures of enhancements and regeneration which will help improve the physical environment within the centres and establishes a positive policy environment that facilitates improvements to the existing stock of commercial property.
- 9.5 The policy supporting text stipulates that the Council will work in partnership to deliver the objectives of Policy S7 and will integrate other local plans and strategies, including neighbourhood plans where these are being prepared. It also states that investment will be directed to enhance and regenerate areas of environmental, social and economic deprivation. To this end, the Council is undertaking a masterplan process for each town centre within the District, set within the context of the Retail Study conclusions and subsequent Policy S7.
- 9.6 Masterplanning of Tiverton town centre is currently in progress to identify the best ways of enhancing the town centre's attractiveness as a destination for tourism, shopping and leisure. This was subject to a public consultation exercise between May-June 2018 which identified a series of key issues for the masterplan to address as well as a 'priority list' of projects for the town centre. Work is now underway to progress the Tiverton Town Centre masterplan towards a draft document taking into account comments received during the stage 1 consultation<sup>1</sup>. A similar masterplan process will take place for Cullompton and Crediton town centres in due course.
- 9.7 Criterion d) refers to traffic management measures including improving sustainable travel opportunities and interchange facilities to improve town centre environments and accessibility. This is particularly pertinent within the town centres of Crediton and

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<sup>1</sup><https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/documents/s12980/Tiverton%20town%20centre%20masterplan%20Nov%2018%20Cabinet.pdf>

Cullompton. Indeed, the Council has been supporting Crediton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Town Council on a traffic and urban realm feasibility study for the town centre. This study analyses current traffic and urban realm conditions with the town centre and presents a series of conceptual design options for key parts of the High Street and its approaches. The designs aim to improve walkability, traffic behaviours and bus movements, improve the urban realm and address air quality and other environmental issues. It is anticipated that contributions secured through Section 106 agreements or future CIL charges will help fund some of these proposals. The proposals also recognise the Conservation Area status of much of the town Centre. MDDC is keen to see this work progressed, in particular due to the air quality issues caused by traffic in the town centre and also the wider benefits for sustainable travel arising from the proposed urban realm improvements. It is anticipated that this work will feed into a future Crediton town centre masterplan. Policy S7 therefore provides important strategic policy context that helps facilitate such projects.

- 9.8 Overall, Policy S7 sets out a sound strategy that recognises Mid Devon's town centres as the heart of their communities, promotes competitive town centres, recognises that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and plans positively for their futures to encourage economic activity. The policy is therefore consistent with national policy in particular, paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).