

**Response to Consultation on
North West Cullompton Urban Extension**

From Rull Hamlet Association

Summary Response:

- 1) The Council should review the entire current allocation needed in light of the proposed Eastern Urban Extension to Cullompton of 3,000 houses as defined in Mid Devon Plan
- 2) The Council should look to accelerate and prioritise the Eastern extension to deliver vital infrastructure for Cullompton, including the upgrade of J28 M5 to a two bridge junction and development of Eastern Relief Road, so as to remove HGV and a large proportion of vehicular traffic and air pollution from Cullompton High Street
- 3) The Council should explore less environmentally and archaeologically sensitive development sites to the South West of Cullompton to help facilitate the development of the M5 upgrade and Eastern Relief Road
- 4) The Council should look to maintain natural beauty of Rull Hill and protect rural setting of historic Rull Hamlet built around Grade II Listed Mediaeval Farmhouse "Little Rull"
- 5) The proposed new school at Rull Hill would be built in the wrong place given item 1) above, and the amount of landscaping required would be detrimental to both the skyline and the natural green environment.

The Rull Hamlet Association has met and deliberated at length over the consultation on the draft Masterplan:

We feel that this now needs to be strategically reviewed in the light of the decision from Mid Devon Council to define Eastern Cullompton as the site of a major urban extension of 3,000 homes in the future.

The key priorities facing Cullompton now are air quality and traffic in the High Street, and also the congestion on the M5 junction with already frequent tailbacks from the Northbound slip road onto the carriageway at peak times, and also onto the M5 in the mornings backing up to the Bullring and onto Millennium Way.

We believe that neither Option as presented will address either of these issues adequately, only allowing some diversion of traffic bound between Tiverton Road and Willand Road along a new link road, but not addressing the major flows of traffic travelling South from the M5 junction to the B3181 Southbound from Cullompton and the extensive residential dwellings on the South West boundary of Cullompton.

Furthermore a further 700-1100 houses on the North West Boundary of Cullompton would place an intolerable strain on J28 without any development of a second bridge over the Motorway and construction of an Eastern Relief Road to bypass the High Street.

As this allocation predates the Mid Devon decision to extensively develop the East of Cullompton, we believe this whole allocation should be reviewed strategically.

We cannot support either of the Options presented as we do not believe they serve the best interests of Cullompton.

This allocation also involves development of environmentally and archaeologically sensitive land as evidenced in the “constraints” paper and now seeks to develop land previously agreed as green infrastructure in previous consultations.

It proposes development on or adjacent to flood plains and the slopes of Rull Hill on significant gradients which has panoramic views from its peak (currently publically accessible by a public bridleway) which is a significant public amenity which would be be-spoiled by the development proposed, particularly in Option 2.

We thus call upon the Council to consider early allocation of further land East of the M5 adjacent to the current outline consent for residential development on the brown field Devon Growers greenhouse site, and consider development of schools and amenities there to support that growing community.

This Eastern extension to the town we do believe will bring the required infrastructure and improvements to Cullompton to effectively regenerate it as a thriving and prosperous market town whereas persisting with a North Western extension will just further exacerbate the current access problems from the M5 and further cement Cullompton’s current “dormitory town” status.

Our Responses on the Specific Emerging Issues are:

1) Link Road: Prioritise Eastern Relief Road or Option 1

We believe the Eastern Relief Road is a greater priority for Cullompton's needs and, by connecting to the Eastern limit of Swallow Way, it could help bypass a significant quantity of traffic from the town centre and also provide a link for traffic from Tiverton Road to the M5 and South of Cullompton.

If it is to be built, we would support Option 2 so as to leave Rull Lane as an historic Devon country lane enjoyed by many local people.

2) Playing Pitches: Option 1 These clearly need to be reconsidered against any review of the allocation but, of the sites identified, only the site adjacent to Tiverton Road is flat enough to provide these without extensive re-grading of the land.

Pitches to the North of the site seem to be in a flood plain and those on top of Rull Hill, though approximate to one of the options for the school development, are simply not flat enough unless built on the very peak of the hill, thus compromising this significant amenity.

A small school playing field supporting the Primary school might be feasible on Rull Hill but, as previously stated, we believe this should remain as green infrastructure.

3) School: Develop to East of M5 or Option 2

If the allocation is reviewed as suggested, the logical development site for a new school would be East of the M5 to support the new development there. However, if a school is considered a priority then, of the two options presented, Option 2 best preserves the green infrastructure of Rull Hill.

The presence of Roman artefacts on the current Health Centre site strongly suggests there may also be significant archaeological interest on the summit of Rull Hill, potentially similar in importance to those on St Andrew's Hill.

4) Employment Redeploy to east of M5 or Option 1

There is considerable land to the East of the M5 currently ready for development as employment use adjacent to current allocations, and we feel this is the most logical and ideal site for further employment opportunities apart from minor retail or office accommodation (neither of which it should be noted is currently in demand locally).

There is a weight limit on Millennium Way both from the North and South currently prohibiting access to the sites identified in the Allocation to HGVs. Option 1 with its easy access to the M5 junction though represents the most logical site if there is to be any development in this allocation.

5) Gypsy and Traveller Sites Option 1

Our preference is that these are allocated to the West of the site providing easier pedestrian access to the current Town Centre and existing civic amenities.

Rull Hamlet

Finally, we readily recognise that attempts have been made to create a green corridor in the Options presented around the Rull Hamlet in order to preserve the setting of its Mediaeval Grade II Farmhouse, but we are concerned that erosion of previous green infrastructure allocations, especially on the summit and slopes of Rull Hill, will effectively be-spoil this.

In Option 2, there is significant development on the Northern slopes of Rull Hill adjacent to Rull Lane, and also proposed future development to the West of Rull Hamlet, plus the possibility of access road encircling Rull Hamlet to the North and West.

This 'development creep' could effectively isolate Rull Hamlet amongst an urban environment and we cannot support it.

Developing land to the East of the M5 at an earlier stage than planned, and without all the constraints of the North Western Allocation, is our preferred Option for the Council to consider and adopt.