

## **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - COMMENTS**

### **1. Vision & Spatial Strategy**

**Agree:** to support town centres (open railway stations; improve quality of parking; build relief roads; increase local services and community facilities as necessary);

**Agree:** to develop underused and brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites.

**Disagree:** that blurring town/parish boundaries (Willand/Uffculme/Sampford Peverell in the J27 proposal; Tiverton/Halberton in the Tiverton extension; possibly Cullompton/Willand) could possibly promote community wellbeing – or diverse, inclusive communities.

**Disagree:** that the J27 development would benefit the provision of attractive, lively and successful town centres. Locating another development outside our existing town centres would have a significantly adverse effect on all of them leading to yet more town centre decay by diverting labour and, even more importantly, customers.

**Disagree:** that tourists are attracted by Imax cinemas, concert halls, or indeed outlet parks, which belong in town centres. In my experience, visitors come to Mid Devon for its wonderful countryside, which is currently on display from the moment they leave the M5 at J27 and should remain so.

**Disagree:** that a Transport Museum would draw the crowds (consult another industrial heritage site at Coldharbour Mill in Uffculme about its problems, in respect of both visitors and volunteers).

**Disagree:** that a hotel/conference centre complex alongside the motorway would prove a draw – there are places available at J25 and probably J29 and J30. If absolutely necessary one could be incorporated in an expansion of J28 at Cullompton, but again it should be to enhance the town centre rather draw people away from it.

I regret to note that, at a time when concern about global population increase is paramount, there appears to be no reference to the protection of productive farmland: (viz: outgoing NFU President, Peter Kendall at NFU Conference in February: “We must stop sacrificing our productive farmland to crazy, rampant and thoughtless urbanisation”.)

In all, the “historic sense of place” would be shattered by the J27 development.

### **2. Opinion about these policies (S1-S2)**

**Support:** directing the majority of development to the towns. (And particularly the references to reducing the need for car travel – i.e. presumably no more out of town retail/leisure sites).

### **3. Which options do you prefer (S3)**

**Support Option 1:** Continue to focus most development in the towns.

### **4. If Option 2 under policy S3 were adopted:**

**Support Option 2(b).** Cullompton (and indeed other towns in the area) needs some t.l.c. Opening the railway station and expanding the existing industrial area, with the long-needed provision of a relief road, would make a lot of sense.

### **5. Strategic housing policies (S4-S6)**

Whilst I appreciate the need for more housing, I hope the Council will develop underused and brownfield sites in town and village centres first to ensure a mix of office, residential and leisure facilities in the centres (viz: St Austell). There are properties in the centre of Uffculme - including the old Post Office - which have been on the market for years.

No development should be permitted outside the currently defined settlement limits.

## **6. Commercial floorspace (S7-S9)**

**Support:** provided it is concentrated in the existing (numerous) half-empty industrial sites, or, in the case of retail/leisure, in the town centres. To obviate the increase in ever-larger lorries pounding up our lanes and shaking the foundations of our ancient towns and villages, a long-term view should consider more rail freight (and even the restoration of the Culm Valley railway, and more commercial use of the Canal!)

\* - how, there's a tourist attraction! -

## **7. Environmental assets/climate change (S10)**

**Support:** but keeping very much in mind:

1. The importance of protection of productive farmland – a part of the “distinctive qualities of Mid Devon’s natural landscape”;
2. Development in wider catchments of rivers and flood plains needs to be curbed (see Site Allocations section below).

## **8. Strategic policies for towns and villages (S11-S15)**

The Council should ensure that any “Farm Diversification” (S15) projects protect productive farmland and that “Leisure related facilities” (of which there are already several within easy reach) are in keeping with the countryside. Working farms that open their doors to visitors or put on countryside activities should take precedence as tourist attractions which display Mid Devon at its best.

I have already indicated my strong objections to any further development at J27. The current plans would create a suburban sprawl stretching from Willand, Uffculme, Sampford Peverell, and destroy the wonderful patchwork of villages which is such an attraction for visitors from urban areas. The excellent garden centres and farm shops in the area promoting local food, and cinemas in Tiverton and Wellington, would be put out of business by the current plans at J27 – not to mention sports and leisure facilities already available in most villages (and backed by fully equipped leisure centres in all of our towns). There are already several industrial sites in the area which are not filled. The whole development seems to me completely unnecessary, and designed to benefit a few to the detriment of the many.

## **9. Site Allocations section**

The Uffculme map provided with the Review shows it being “boxed in” by an enormous Minerals consultation zone and waste management facility to the north and east; more housing to fill in the gaps to the north and a large section to the west; and the proposed J27 development on the north-west boundary. The River, so far, prevents too much development to the south. I hope the Council will consider this a bit much (particularly as we have been a centre of quarrying and landfill in the area for many years). Bearing in mind that changes in land use account for increased flooding by making rainwater run more quickly into rivers, the Council is, I hope, considering very carefully any development in the whole of the bowl of land that slopes down to the River Culm. Development in wider catchments of rivers and flood plains needs to be curbed. (viz: Hydrological Sciences Journal). Residents living near the river have been under flood warnings several times this year already, though luckily levels dropped in time. If all this proposed development goes ahead, they might not be so lucky in the future.