

Sandra Hutchings

Ack

From: Elizabeth Verdonkschot <...>
Sent: 22 March 2014 22:42
To: DPD
Cc: ...ans
Subject: Proposed development on land outside of Willand Settlement Boundary and at J 27 M5

Woodbury
 Oakfield
 Willand
 Cullompton
 EX15 2UA



19 March 2014

We write to comment on, and express our objections to, the proposals put forward for consultation in respect of the nature and scale of future development in and around Willand.

It is proposed that additional housing and retail development should be undertaken at various sites around Willand, outside of the settlement boundary in addition to those already earmarked for the provision of affordable housing, which showed up in the legal searches when we moved here, namely, a small site on the Uffculme Road for 9 houses and a site adjacent to the B3181 to the south side of Willand.

Proposed expansion sites adjacent to the settlement boundary of Willand

Additional housing sites now proposed to the South of the village all lie very close to already existing business areas, the motorway and the railway, and we believe to a sewage site - instead of developing these sites, a change of usage from business use to housing use of some of the currently underused land and sites on the already existing Willand Business Park would provide land for affordable housing for local need within the settlement boundary, as we understand it, in addition to the nine houses proposed already for the Uffculme Road site and for land adjacent to the B3181 near the petrol station.

In respect of the **Quicks Farm** site, our objections are as follows:

-the site is outside the settlement boundary

- this will involve loss of valuable agricultural land to the farm itself and could significantly impact on the viability of the farm business

- any houses put on this site will be immediately adjacent to a working and productive farm and such proximity will bring noise from the operation of farm machinery, along with the impacts of slurry and the summer impact of flies, which already exists.

- the proposed density of the development is greater than that generally recommended and previously developed to, and will thus adversely impact on the whole character of the neighbourhood and village.

-existing neighbouring properties will suffer loss of residential amenity by reason of overlooking, loss of privacy and overshadowing, and properties bordering the field in question would suffer a loss of views to the Blackdown Hills, thus adversely affecting their residential amenity.

-access for such a large number of houses will put intolerable pressure on the roads of the surrounding area, which are already congested at peak hours of the day, with parking for many properties on the roads. Some roads do not have pavements, raising the issue of safety for an increased population, particularly children.

-entrance/exit onto the Uffculme Road from Quicks Lane would be dangerous, given the usage of the lane by farm vehicles and the speed of vehicles approaching Willand from Uffculme, and the lack of pavement along the Uffculme road..

-environmental issues relating to the field could include disturbance to important flora and fauna in the hedgerows; it is clear in the summer months that there are local populations of bats, whose existence will be threatened by any proposed development.

-it is believed that the field is bordered by a historic Devon bank, and that there may be archeological interest unearthed during any proposed development, which would require extensive evaluation.

The local plan proposal, Section 2.18 states 'The council is seeking community views on a range of development sites in rural areas and will aim to allocate a level of development that reflects local need and demand without harming village character' .

Also Mid Devon District Council's Core Strategy 2026 contains two points in relation to local development which have been summarised as follows:

• concentrate new development within the towns, protecting their character, with priority given to development of brownfield sites and supporting town centre vitality and viability '

• strictly limit development in open countryside, protecting its character, whilst promoting rural diversification '

The above developments alone far exceed core policy for villages, according to Parish council response of July 2013, and will clearly harm the character of Willand as a village.

Additional housing and retail development to the north of Willand and at J27 M5

-The proposed developments fall outside of the settlement boundary

-The size and nature will change the character of Willand from a village to a town, tripling its overall size

- infrastructure for the existing population in the village has medical facilities under pressure, an oversubscribed primary school with limited room for expansion to cope with increased numbers of children, and only basic shopping facilities.

-Willand has expanded considerably over the years already.

If 3000 new houses along the B3181 from J27 are proposed, why is any other development outside the settlement elsewhere in Willand necessary?

-Traffic through Willand and surrounding areas would increase enormously on roads without safe pedestrian paths

-In the event of incidents closing the M5 between J27 and J28, much of the traffic from these proposed 3000 new homes and the proposed retail park would be directed down the B3181 through Willand Village and into Cullompton, which is already highly congested in its centre.

-Existing amenities in Willand are basic so that residents are reliant on car usage with the concomitant carbon footprint issues and wider environmental impacts of increased numbers of vehicles. Further development will increase this situation.

-In respect of the proposed retail development at J27, this will, in our opinion, spell the death knell of the town centres of Tiverton and Cullompton, as it is well documented that the development of out of town centres impinges on the ability of small independent businesses in town centres to survive, when faced with the competition of larger businesses in out of town centres, and seems to run contrary to stated aims of Core Strategy 2026.

Concerns about the extent of this proposal have also been expressed in the media by Exeter City Council (Express and Echo 6.2.14) and the Exeter MP (Express and Echo 30.1.14) regarding its impact on Exeter in economic terms.

Cullompton in particular is already in dire need of inward investment to stimulate its economy, and turn it back into the thriving town it historically was - with this historical importance, it deserves to be put back on the map and encouraged to thrive - it does not make economic sense to allow Tiverton and Cullompton to deteriorate at the expense of an out of town centre which will not immediately benefit and will, more likely, negatively impact on the centres and local populations of these two towns.

There is surely a very good argument to allow any housing and retail development to take place at Cullompton, which would provide a huge boost to this town which is also strategically placed in respect of the M5 motorway, particularly as Cullompton appears to be interested in this development, and there is talk of re-opening Cullompton Railway Station besides; this would surely also accord with the stated aims of the Core Strategy 2026 as outlined above.

It has been said that J27 is the gateway to Devon - if this is the case, the idea that a large retail park with cinema, shops, leisure activities (at present not fully outlined) is the optimal way to reflect the spirit and nature of the county is baffling and very concerning. Devon's strength is its natural beauty - people come to Devon to get away from the sprawling developments of the much of the South East, Midlands and North (including myriad out of town centres) to experience a more natural way of life based on the beauty of the land and seascape and the smaller, rural and natural industries arising from the land. Devon already very effectively showcases its produce, its agriculture, craft industries, fishing industry and advertises its tourism industry with great success. A centre to further promote and expand these would be ideally suited to Cullompton with its historical importance and past economic strength based on the wool trade.

We believe these proposals can do nothing other than drastically harm the village character of Willand, and negatively impact on the economic prospects of the two nearest neighbouring towns Tiverton and Cullompton, as well as the well being of the populations of these places.

Yours faithfully

