



**Sustainable
Crediton**

Mid Devon District Council Local Plan Review

1. Introduction

1.1 We welcome this opportunity to comment on the local plan. Overall we support the general principles within the plan and the emphasis that is given to issues of climate change, sustainability and the need to move towards a more low carbon community.

For instance in 1.28 on page 12, it states:

'Energy is a crucial consideration in the functioning of the economy, and one area of concern is the future of non-renewable sources of energy and the impact of climate change. National government support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and encourage the use of existing resources and renewable resources.'

We believe that this principle should be kept in mind in considering all the developments that may occur in Mid Devon over the next 20 to 30 years.

1.2 The word 'sustainable' is used frequently within the report and we would endorse the definition given in 2.1 on page 19 that sustainable development should be defined as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

This has implication for all aspects of development including transport, housing and the production and use of energy. Developments which result in increased greenhouse emissions overall do adversely affect the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and therefore new developments should as far as possible generate renewably as much energy as they use in order to be environmentally sustainable.

2 Vision and Spatial Strategy (page 15)

We would endorse the principles in this section but put particular emphasis on 'Respect environmental limits' and the intentions set out that

- Waste is minimised and recycling rates are high
- Public transport, walking and cycling are encouraged
- Floodplains remain undeveloped.

3. Meeting housing needs

We support the principle of 'developing underused and brownfield sites within the towns in preference to greenfield land or public open spaces'.

As far as Crediton is concerned, we believe the targets for new housing can be met without needing to build on Pedlerspool.

We also support the proposal for a new development near the M5, as set out in the report . However we hope that if this happens, employment opportunities will be encouraged close by to avoid long commuting journeys to Exeter or Taunton. And adequate public transport, cycle paths and footpaths, and community scale renewable energy systems.

In relation to the design of new houses, we are concerned that standards for energy conservation may be watered down in the new standards being drawn up by the government which will replace the Code for Sustainable Homes. Pressure should be put on developers to adopt the highest standards of energy conservation in all new builds as well as houses with zero carbon emissions as is the case with the passivhaus design. (some of these houses are being built in Exeter) Whilst the cost of building may be slightly higher, it will result in great savings for the home owner over the years, a very important consideration at a time of increasing cost and scarcity of energy resources.

We support the idea that land should be specially set aside to enable self-build to take place although agree that the definition of self-build needs to be carefully set out to avoid builders finding ways round this. If possible, we would like these self-build plots to be earmarked as affordable and for local people in housing need, and kept affordable in perpetuity in the same way that rural exceptions sites are required to be. We would like Mid Devon to adopt a policy (as happens in Dorset and Pembrokeshire) whereby people who wish to make the bulk of their income from the land and who can't afford a house, are allowed to build low impact and removable dwellings on land they are cultivating. They would need to provide business plans to show how they would do this and housing designs. The long term aim should be to create a housing stock that is fit for a low-energy future.

4. Renewable Energy

We strongly support an increase in all forms of renewable energy including solar photovoltaic panels, biomass systems, and wind farms. A recent report from the Centre for Alternative Technology has shown that the UK has the technical capacity to move towards a zero carbon society. As climate change and global warming increase, it becomes more essential to cut back on the extraction and use of fossil fuels and to invest in renewable energy.

At the same time, we accept that developments should only be permitted when 'they do not have significant adverse impacts on the character, amenity and visual quality of the area' (DM5 page 14)

This is especially relevant to the development of wind farms where there has been public opposition to many of the new proposed wind farms. We believe wind farms have a key role to play alongside other forms of renewable energy but they need to be sited carefully. One way of taking this forward would be for the council to identify

suitable sites for wind farms and encourage applications in these areas, rather than simply react to proposals that come in.

We would also like MDDC to assist communities that are setting up community energy schemes.

We would point out that the government has retained a key planning rule enabling councils to impose local targets for green energy in new homes. This planning rule is known as the Merton rule and we would like to see it implemented in every new home.

5. Transport

We support the encouragement given in the report to alternatives to car use within the District, such as walking, cycling and travelling by bus or train. And we do not accept that car ownership must inevitably increase as forecast by the research for the Dept of Communities and Local Government in 2007 (LP3 1.31) which predicts an increase in car ownership between 2001 and 2026 of 18%. As the report states, road transport accounts for a third of end-user carbon emissions in Mid Devon, at a time when European and National policies set increasingly challenging targets for reduction of carbon emissions.

High speed broadband in rural areas will help since it reduces the need for people to travel so much for work.

We ask that cycle paths be planned, not as now, on a piecemeal basis, but as essential Mid Devon infrastructure. Creating these with frequent, joined up bus and train services, will empower people, in the face of rising fuel prices, to choose less polluting forms of transport.

For car users, we support the move towards low emission transport and providing the appropriate infrastructure for electricity supply for cars powered this way. And building in charging points to new housing developments.

6 Resilience within communities

This could be helped by undertaking a study to find out where communities are most vulnerable and then steps could be taken to address the weaknesses, in conjunction with the communities themselves.

7. Ongoing dialogue

We hope to continue to have a dialogue with MDDC on all of the issues addressed in this submission.

Gerald Conyngham (on behalf of Sustainable Crediton and member of the core group)
March 20th 2014

Information about Sustainable Crediton

Sustainable Crediton was set up in 2007 and is part of the Transition Town movement. We aim to help our community become truly self-supporting and resilient in the face of the current challenges of the financial crisis, energy shortages and food insecurity. Our newsletter goes out to 620 people.