
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 September 2018 16:56
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Baxter's Farm Development, Musbury

Dear Sirs

We are writing in response to the Baxter's Farm, Musbury Development Brief and the subsequent public meeting on 15 August 2018.

Firstly, we would like to state that we are, in principle, in favour of this development. It has always been the preferred site for expansion of housing in the village and if planned and developed sympathetically will be an asset to the village. What we read in the Brief leads us to believe the proposed plans for the 'Built-up Area' are generally very satisfactory.

There are two matters relating to this Brief and its connection to other Musbury planning issues that disturb us. They are as follows.

Provision of Travellers' site on the land outside the 'Built-up Area'

-) This seems a totally inappropriate use of this land. At the public meeting it was stated that this site would be used for 'permanent' rather than transit Travellers, though there is no mention of this in the Brief. We were told permanent Travellers are based on the site for most of the year, but spend some time travelling. Isn't this essentially what so many of the existing residents do? Yet existing residents are required to conform to planning rules that mean their properties fit in with the historic village, the conservation area and the AONB. How would the travellers' accommodation conform?
-) Elsewhere in the Brief it states "the (former) orchard beyond rises a further 10m, meaning any development will be visible in longer range views." In other words, the Travellers' site would be very visible and detrimental to the area. The provision of screening or landscaping would mean the loss of "key views" as detailed in the Brief.
-) In the East Devon Villages Plan it states that "Musbury is the smallest settlement to have a built-up area boundary defined in the Villages Plan". Clearly then having a Travellers' site will have a far greater impact on this small village than say a large village or town. It seems that the convenience of having Devon Council-owned land has overridden the practicalities and sensitivities that should have been considered in the Brief.
-) An additional concern is contained within Policy H7 of the Local Plan. It states: " 7. Where sites already exist within the locality, new pitches should be accommodated through expansion/increased use of these existing sites". The implication of this is that once a site is established it may be expanded to meet the Council's future quota demands. In doing so it would exacerbate the problems detailed above.
-) We understand the Council's requirement to provide Traveller sites and the need of these people to have decent and appropriate places to live, but it seems in this case convenience and short-term availability have taken priority over suitability.

The Doatshayne Lane Development should not have been excluded from the Brief

-) Consideration should have been given to the Doatshayne Lane development in compiling this Brief. Together these two developments will potentially increase Musbury's population by over 15% yet there is no mention of the Doatshayne Lane development in this Brief. An increase of this magnitude will put a great deal of strain on the infrastructure of even a so-called 'sustainable location'.

-) We do not know the precise timings regarding the planning application for the 15-home development on Doatshayne Lane and the subsequent advice from Devon Council that they were putting Baxter's Farm up for sale, but the end result seems very convenient. It was always known, since at least the review of the village boundary consultation in 2012, that the preferred site for new homes in Musbury was Baxter's Farm. Interestingly, in that consultation, Doatshayne Lane was not even one of the alternatives.
-) Baxter's Farm could have satisfied the need for 10 affordable homes, but Devon Council would, in all probability, have received much less in sales proceeds if this had been the case. Council Tax payers may benefit in the short-term, but Musbury residents will suffer in the long-term.
-) In 2016 the Doatshayne Lane privately-owned development came before EDDC planning. Initially, planning approval was declined, but a revised application was approved by a casting vote of the Parish Council in May 2017, but was objected to by the majority of village correspondents. It was a very contentious development, but was only approved by an EDDC Planning sub-committee in July 2018, without referral to the Development Management Committee. It seems that many involved such as the Parish Council Chairman, some EDDC councillors and Devon councillors were still unaware of the decision following the approval. The Baxter's Farm Brief came available towards the end of July 2018, very shortly after the Grant of Planning Permission for Doatshayne Lane, but presumably both were known and available to the Planning Committee prior to this. Were they considered together?
-) Does Musbury have a need for both housing developments? And if only one would satisfy the need, surely the one in the Built-Up Area would be the appropriate one? Has maximising Council revenue led to the approval of an unsuitable development, when it was known the preferred and most appropriate site would soon be available?

We will welcome any comments you have regarding the above.

Kind regards

