

RESPONSE OF AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL TO LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION MARCH 2021

APPROVED AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2021.

Axminster Town Council welcomes this opportunity to participate in the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation and is broadly supportive of the objectives and scope as set out in this document.

The District Council should try to draw on common themes from existing Neighbourhood Plans to inform some of the policies it puts in the developing local plan as these have passed the test of having public support.

The structure for the Local Plan acts as a useful template for those in the process of preparing Neighbourhood plans. {NOTE THAT THIS STATEMENT DOES NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION POSED IN THE CONSULTATION WHEREAS THE HIGHLIGHTED PARAGRAPH WAS AN ATTEMPT TO DO SO, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY IN FINAL FORM AS IT WAS JUST THERE TO STIMULATE DEBATE}

Many topics, such as Health and Wellbeing, Green Energy and Sustainable Transport align well with Axminster Town Council thinking and its “direction of travel” following declaration of a climate emergency in 2019.

While Axminster Town Council can see merit in all the development options set out, it has had a settled policy for many years to accept larger scale development, as set out in the current local plan, to enable the delivery of a relief road as a means of addressing some of the traffic problems experienced in parts of the town. Members are aware that without expansion, the town will stagnate. Additional housing will provide a workforce which will attract employment opportunities and help support and retain important and valued facilities such as the schools, medical facilities and entertainment/hospitality venues. The new housing should have a range of housing types, particularly those starting out on the housing ladder and those down-sizing. Small blocks of mixed 1, 2 and 3 bedroom flats set in pleasantly landscaped areas will do much to enhance and encourage community cohesion and develop pride in place.

The financial costs make the provision of a west of Axminster bypass an unrealistic dream (and one which, if realised might lead tourists to pass by Axminster altogether {the Aviemore effect} with disastrous consequences for the local economy). The medieval street pattern presents considerable problems for through traffic of all kinds and especially heavy goods vehicles. It is for these reasons that the Town Council has long supported the need for a relief road as a realistic, more affordable compromise to resolve traffic problems which will only get worse if nothing is done. That this could be achieved as part of overall housing development east of Axminster will enable the route to be aligned with more flexibility than within the existing built-up area.

The Town Council has long been aware of the stress caused to many of its residents over recent years as a result of the poor standards of much, new-build development by mass housing providers and would urge the District Council to continue to put pressure on Central Government to put strong measures in place to eradicate this nationwide problem.

Diversity of employment opportunities and town centre regeneration will be key to Post COVID 19 recovery along with the need to ensure that care is taken of the protected heritage, both built and environmental. While Axminster, with its mainline station, is well-placed for those who wish to

commute into Exeter, there is a strong historic pattern showing preference for locally based work within the town itself.

The concept of a Development Corporation is interesting. This approach to development proved useful in energising the local economy in the post war era when several new towns were built and ensured avoidance of some of the problems occurring in areas where existing towns were simply expanded. The Town Council looks forward with interest as to how the District Council intends to develop this concept.