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Sent: 15 January 2023 16:07
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Comments on emerging local plan

Categories: Reg.18 consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the emerging local plan. I have read the whole plan (which took a while!) and am very supportive of lots of elements within it. I am particularly supportive of your listed objectives and the large strategic decisions that you propose: the development of a new town to the west of the region; the designations of settlements for significant development and those for supporting development; the pivot towards a more environmentally sustainable region with a focus on nature regeneration and renewable energy. It is clear that the plan is well-informed and that you have considered the region and its needs very carefully.

I have two objections to the emerging local plan which I would appreciate you considering.

First, the total amount of housing being proposed seems simply too large for the region. Building a further 20,000 over the next twenty years, in a region that currently hosts just 72,000 dwellings, proposes a level and pace of development that I believe the region will struggle to incorporate sustainably. This is particularly important given East Devon's many protected landscapes and its prevalent sense of unspoilt historicity. Once this is gone, it is gone. So I would prefer that the level of development proposed was more modest, and hope that the Government's recently shifted stance on house-building targets allows for these underpinning figures to be reconsidered. I don't know but I would be surprised if other predominantly rural Local Authorities are planning to grow their housing stock by more than a quarter in the next twenty years?

Second, I have specific comments relating to elements of the plan that would affect Gittisham village, where I am a resident. I am opposed to the development of LP_Gitti_05 and LP_Gitti_06, as well as Gitt_04. The houses proposed are a very considerable distance from Honiton Town Centre and are far closer to the 'Open Countryside' settlement of Gittisham than the town. Falling to the south of the railway line, I believe the housing development would significantly affect the character of Gittisham and jeopardise the setting of the village which has contributed to its conservation designation. I believe the proposed development runs contrary to your stated objective in relation to open countryside: *The outstanding open countryside and coastal qualities that characterise much of our District will be protected by ensuring development is only allowed in these areas in limited, locally justified circumstances.* The Gittisham Conservation Plan stresses how 'The village must have looked the same 200-300 years ago'; 'the village has a near perfect setting [...] surrounded by largely pastoral countryside'; 'the character of Gittisham is very special and even relatively small changes that are out of character can seriously affect the quality of the environment'; and 'Gittisham vies with Broadhembury as being the most complete and unchanged thatched estate village in East Devon'. I hope these extracts convey the vulnerability of the settlement to over- or insensitive development of the surrounding area. The two proposed residential developments would fall within the ED AONB, and be highly visible from viewpoints in the BH AONB. Finally, for most residents in these houses travel to Honiton would be by car (because of the distance to shops and amenities), resulting in significantly more car travel in the area and through the already congested Heathpark Industrial Estate. In summary, whilst I support the proposed further development of Honiton as a residential and industrial centre in the region (note I am not objecting to Gitti_03, which lies further from Gittisham village), I do not believe the town's development should be to the detriment of its network of surrounding villages.

Stephen Howe
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