

Submitted Information:

Name

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Comment

Following the announcement of the initial GESP proposals, we would like to submit the following feedback, as residents of Newton St Cyres.

1. GESP must be referred to a meeting of the Full Council before it goes out for further consultation. The potential consequences of this outline plan for residents in Mid Devon are too important to not to be considered by Full Council. I know that this has been requested by Graeme Barnell and we fully support this.
2. GESP was drawn up in a pre-COVID-19 era. The Pandemic has changed our economy, professional and personal lives beyond measure. Many of these changes as a result of the Pandemic will be permanent and it is essential that GESP takes this on board. Exeter City Centre is going to see a period of unprecedented change in the coming years and there will be many more Brownfield sites becoming available, providing opportunities for development in areas with existing infrastructure and strategic locations. These opportunities cannot be ignored by GESP. Environmentally, we should be actively supporting the regeneration of our Brownfield sites, above developing our rural locations on a mass scale. If GESP stands for (Greater Exeter Strategic Plan) why are most of the sites out of Exeter?
3. GESP will remove local control of local housing targets and development land allocations and replace this with a sub-regional planning framework that will decide on sites and targets. The thought of a development cooperation building huge housing developments across Mid Devon is not a good one. Mid Devon will lose all control and accountability will be difficult to achieve. This goes against everything that Mid Devon, and its Parish Councils, have worked for over many years.
4. Using a "boundary blind" approach as per GESP, and the fact that Mid-Devon borders a large proportion of Exeter (as the region's capital) it is likely that could Mid Devon is exposing itself to an unknown allocation of housing from its neighbours over and above what would otherwise be its own requirements and targets. This is quite a scary thought.
5. As a location Newton St Cyres / Sweetham does not have the necessary infrastructure to support such large scale development. The A377 is already under great strain, and does not provide dual carriageway access, like many other sites. The village has a train station, however to make this a viable commuter line, huge investment would need to be made to widen the track. There is only one morning weekday train in operation, and only a few in the afternoon. This would not be suitable as a commuter line, without extensive changes to infrastructure and services from GWR. A new school provision and services would be required to support such development.
6. Newton St Cyres is a location of great environmental and rural heritage. All recent development has been undertaken within appropriate scale, and with great sensitivity to

the area. A development of 1200 houses is totally inappropriate to this area.

7. Newton St Cyres as a location is not appropriate for large-scale development because the main proposed area for development sits within a flood plain.

8. Public concern amongst residents from all councils signed-up to the GESP will create high levels of friction and opposition. During this time of global Pandemic, we should be looking after our communities, not putting more pressure on them.

9. Mid Devon is on track to meet its existing housing targets from within allocations that have either been agreed within the emerging Local Plan or described within preliminary consultation about the Culm Garden Village. It is very difficult to see what Mid Devon has to gain from GESP, if it has no level of certainty or control over what will be built within its boundaries. While the very ethos of GESP seems to be to take a joined up approach, and share the housing allocation burden between Councils and crucially, take the burden away from Exeter City Council, this should not be agreed at the cost of Mid Devon. As a Council, Mid Devon has always considered all development within the District extremely carefully - why should all this hard work and consideration end now?

10. We are not sure that enough investment, time and thought has been spent conceiving the GESP, and to communicate the vision, As such, in this post-COVID-world, the whole concept requires the rethink.

11. It is clearly important that new homes are built within Mid Devon. While our view is that cooperation with our neighbouring Councils in support of the national housing agenda is necessary, new homes should be built in appropriate places, and to an appropriate scale. Of the sites in Mid Devon that have been identified, some will be suitable and others will be less suitable, due a variety of factors. New development should suit the location within which it is sited - if we build large-scale developments in areas ill-equipped to support such increases in population, we end up with poor quality housing provision at the end of the day. In this COVID-19 era, we must look again at Exeter City Centre and find new opportunities for development on Brownfield sites. We should also prioritise sites in Mid Devon with access to modern road infrastructure and services.

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