

Dear Louise,

**0588/19: Land at Station Road, Moretonhampstead**

I write to object to this proposal.

Undoubtedly it would have some benefits. The site as it stands is an unattractive reminder of industrial change and decay on an important approach road to the town. The proposal would make use of this land, providing 12 bungalows (in demand for downsizers), and a link to the Wray Valley cycle track; it would also preserve (somewhat undistinguished) elements of the town's railway heritage.

However there are more downsides, and it would be a sadly missed opportunity.

Moretonhampstead has carried out three surveys since 2008. All have emphasized (a) that Moretonians value and want to protect the character of our small Dartmoor market town and its setting in the Wray Valley, beneath Mardon Down (b) that Moretonians feel that the town's roads and parking are already overstretched (c) that further development should be gradual and small-scale, should deliver clear benefits to the town, responding to local need - especially affordable and social housing and employment opportunities, and should not be contemplated without improvement to our roads.

This proposal does little to meet these concerns.

The site is on the edge of the town, at a main entry point. As such, the type of houses and the materials used should, as your policies emphasise, respect and sustain local character and distinctiveness, and the houses should be at a density appropriate to a rural edge location. Instead, the proposal is to build 35 mainly rather bland and repetitive houses, with little attempt to respect local distinctiveness in form or material apart from a slightly lame street-front pastiche along the street frontage. The goods shed is retained as a genuflection to heritage; however the stark contrast with the rest of the houses is likely to look and feel odd.

There nothing to meet our main local need – affordable housing, especially at entry level and social housing. It is true that the applicants are not obliged to provide this because it is a brownfield site; however it is a great pity that they have chosen not to respond to this need while claiming that the development would meet local needs.

I was delighted to see, in the most recent draft local plan, that policy MTN 2 had added a recommendation that the site should have no more than 24 houses, and that 45% of them should be affordable. While I understand that this has not yet been adopted, it suggests a better future for the site, and a sadly missed opportunity if the application is approved.

The town has two main infrastructure problems, both, as they are, constraints on growth. The first and main problem is access by the A 382. Though a county primary route, the number of narrow pinchpoints, many of them blind, between Bovey and the A 30 make access slow, with frequent traffic jams in summer, or when HGVs or tractors with trailers meet. One such pinchpoint is in the centre of Moreton. Parking is difficult in winter, and expensive in summer. While applauding attempts to persuade people to drive less, Moretonians often have little option because of the shortage of local employment and the very limited availability of public transport, which is unlikely to change in the near future. This proposed development – 35 houses each with more than two parking places, can only put added pressure on our congested roads.

Much is made of the claimed reduction in HGV movements. Thompsons have to a large extent stopped using the site for routine HGV movements, which are based at Okehampton (and which is why this part of their site isn't used), and so most of this "benefit" has already happened. Thompsons mostly use the site now for maintenance and testing, and as we understand have no plans to stop this – so the southern part of the site will stay in use as a familiar eyesore, limiting any benefit from reusing part of the site. There would be much more benefit to Moreton if Thompsons stopped using the site completely.

The plan to reduce the width of Station Road to limit speeding seems questionable. If this were the aim, better signs (including ones that register the speed of oncoming vehicles and flash appropriately) would probably be more effective.

Sadly the proposals make few concessions to sustainability and climate change; the site is well-located for PVA arrays and solar water heating, but I haven't found anything about this in the proposal, nor any mention of EV charging points: another missed opportunity.

Finally, the argued economic benefits seem grossly overstated. There would be some short-term gain from spend by construction workers (most likely not to be locals), and some longer-term but limited gain for local plumbers, painters and other trades once the houses start to have problems; but it's hard to see where 7 new jobs are supposed to come from. The claimed local spend benefit of £1M seems improbable – that would be £30K per house. Given likely incomes (after tax), once the occupants have paid for their houses, cars, utilities, holidays and so on, and have bought their household staples on-line, £3K local spend/year per household is much more likely what's likely – total of £100K/yr rather than £1M. Experience from other recent local developments doesn't suggest a larger figure.

Please stick to your guns, wait until MTN2 kicks in, and give Moreton a better future. If this development is approved, it will be hard to resist rapid similar development of the rest of Thompsons Yard, Courtenay Meadow and so on, and the loss of what is at the moment a rather unspoiled and unpretentious moorland market town. Moreton and Dartmoor deserve better than this.