

STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL

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8th July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

North Taunton Development

Following the consultation held at Staplegrove Village Hall on 3rd July I write to give our understanding of the current situation and our view of the revised details of the proposed development.

Staplegrove Parish Council is still of the opinion that the planned development remains flawed for all the reasons given in our letter dated 23 February 2015 which included:

- The development is unwanted, misplaced, excessively large and will destroy the character of the village.
- It is strongly resisted by the local community who feel that building 1500 houses on mostly prime agricultural land would be criminal and will destroy a magnificent rural aspect currently enjoyed by many Taunton citizens.
- As previously stated there is little or no employment north of Taunton which means that any resident in this proposed development will have to cross town in order to reach areas of employment thus causing further congestion on the urban network.

We consider that the fundamental question is how the scheme and its crucial spine road could be constructed.

From the meeting held on the afternoon of 2nd July and I believe confirmed at the meeting in the morning of 3rd July, we understand that it is the Promoters' intention on day one of start of works that the land covered by the proposed Phases 1a, 1b and 1c of the latest scheme would be sold to developers and the money put into an escrow account, the use of which is solely for the purpose of constructing the spine road. This it was claimed will ensure that the road would be completed over its full length.

Unfortunately, it is argued that in order to secure sufficient funds to cover this cost, it would be necessary to allow the developers to start building works on these sites at the earliest opportunity. The land involved equates to about 400 dwellings or something over 25% of the total number of units to be provided by the scheme. We have been told that it is likely that two developers will be appointed to build the eastern end of the site and a further two for the western end and, therefore, it can be safely assumed that each of the three phases will be in the hands of different contractors. Also, we are told it would be the intention to appoint one highway contractor to construct the whole length of the spine road. We understand that the roadworks would be planned to be completed by the end of the building work for the first phases and that this would take approximately two years.

Therefore, after something over one year of construction, there should be about 200 houses built, sold and occupied and if we assume that each house has two cars then there are likely to be some 400 more cars than

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at present that would need to make use of Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane on a daily basis. Of course road and building construction will still be underway and hence in addition to these figures there would also be the vans and vehicles of bricklayers, carpenters, ground workers and roofers etc. who have to get to and from the sites during the morning and evening commuting periods. There would also be the lorries making the deliveries of all the building materials needed and both these figures would need to be multiplied by three for each of the different developers. Hence there will be a significant increase in vehicle movements through Staplegrove and the existing single road through the village cannot accommodate any more congestion. If it is claimed that it could, then we wish to examine the evidence please.

At the current time we know that 715 vehicles pass the church between 8 and 9 in the morning and again during the schoolchildren picking up time and the evening commute. We also know that in the morning the traffic in Manor Road backs up from the Post Office traffic lights to beyond Lawn Road and that the 80% of traffic which wishes to turn right at the traffic lights is limited in this movement by the space available because the A358 Staplegrove Road is also backed up from Silk Mills Road roundabout.

It is widely accepted that this roundabout is already oversubscribed and that that is the reason why the western end of the spine road is not shown connected to it, but comes out in the much more demanding position just west of Wall House. The difficulties on this section of the road are likely to increase with the completion of the Northern Inner Distributor Road and of the Langford Mead housing estate and improvements should be made to increase the size of the junction to enable any future spine road to connect directly on to it.

We have been told that the promoters have options on land to the east which would enable a future extension, perhaps connecting to Nerrols Drive, to form a through route joining with Silk Mills Road to the south, Norton Fitzwarren Bypass to the west and a connection with the A38 to the east.

We understand that should the spine road junction join Staplegrove Road where currently indicated on the proposal plans then it would be controlled by traffic lights and if this method was also applied to phasing at the existing roundabout then there would be 5 separate sets of lights in less than 500metres on this length of the A358!

We expect the spine road to be designed as a Local Distributor Road fully in accordance with the requirements set out in Somerset County Council's 'Estate Roads in Somerset'.

TDBC have stated that it is a fundamental requirement before approval could be given that there should be adequate road infrastructure in place to support the development.

If the current use of the existing road system is nearly at gridlock it would be madness to impose the additional traffic generated by the construction of this development, plus the resulting increasing number of vehicles that the development produces, before a spine road capable of taking the majority of the traffic between Kingston and Staplegrove Roads has been completed. Such a proposal would be totally unworkable in practicable terms.

For all these reasons Staplegrove Parish Council considers, very strongly, that this development is unnecessary, unwanted and should not be allowed to go ahead.

Yours sincerely
Michael Clark
Chairman, Staplegrove Parish Council