

Dear Mr. Tutte

5th November 2019

North Taunton Development – Staplegrave West

I am sorry to trouble you but we do not understand Redrow's approach to the road aspect of the above development and, in particular, to the proposed connection position of the central spine road to the adjacent trunk road network.

The original development Policy TAU2 of Taunton Deane District Council called for the construction of a

'new northern link road from Silk Mills Roundabout on the A358, to Kingston Road with the provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton'.

The provision of the extension eastwards is to enable a circular road to be completed round the west, north and east of Taunton to connect to the M5 motorway junction 25 and beyond by avoiding the congested town centre. This will only require the future addition of 500m or so of new highway to join up with roads being built as part of the many further developments currently under way.

Unfortunately, the development promoters chose to ignore this policy and sited the connection to the A358 some 200m away from the roundabout at a point where very many engineering disadvantages exist. These will make the construction significantly more time consuming and expensive and result in a totally unsatisfactory solution to the road network in the area for years to come.

It is indeed unfortunate that this arrangement has secured outline planning consent and would therefore need to be amended to recover the original intention, perhaps during the full planning application but, if not, there will be ample time for this to be achieved before work is started at this point and it is unlikely that any objections to it would be received.

The reason for not connecting directly with Silk Mills has never been explained by the promoters and the only justification given by Somerset CC Highways in accepting it has been that *'this was where the promoters wanted it'*. The true explanation considered likely is a very cynical one and is suggested in the letters published on the parish council website but is, I am sure, one that you and Redrow would not wish to be associated with. However, as you have retained the original promoters' planning/design consultants, Origin3, you will be able to find the true reason for this position having been originally adopted.

The profound disadvantages of this position are also fully covered on the website but are briefly listed as;

1. the new connection with the A358 is now at a point where a 6m deep cutting is required, just where the spine road is at its widest, having two traffic lanes leaving the road, one entering it, separated by a pedestrian island and with footways on both sides. To provide an acceptable road gradient, the cutting must extend some 210m back before existing ground level is reached.
2. the excavation of this cutting can only be made by small plant working either at main road level or at the high level, both of which will require the trunk road to be closed, at least at the start of the excavation, but very probably for many weeks more. This is

to enable the excavated material to be removed and the closure will cause widespread disruption and congestion on what is the principal route from the north west into the county town.

3. Policy TAU2 also requires a synchronised traffic light system to be provided which must include the adjacent junction at Cross Keys and which, with the spine road at this position, will mean that it will have to cater for three junctions. This will be costly in provision and maintenance and is unlikely to be able to provide a satisfactory solution to the management of the significant amount of traffic that already exists on these roads.

A direct connection with the existing section of the ring road at Silk Mills would provide a four-arm junction. The majority of the additional construction work required for the modified junction would be mostly clear of the A358 road, being carried out on almost level ground to the north of the present junction.

The section of the spine road to connect to this point would also require a cutting, briefly of 4.5m depth, but only where the spine road is at its narrowest and where it could be quickly formed by the use of conventional highway scraper plant.

I have raised this matter with Redrow Homes in Bristol but have only received a rather unsatisfactory reply from Origin3, who probably wish to justify their initial design. It is very much to be hoped that the provision of the £7.2M government grant to the district council for the early construction of the spine road, to ensure that *'the right infrastructure is provided in the right place, at the right time'*, will assist in enabling this matter to be reconsidered so that a more sensible, cheaper and efficient solution can be achieved.

A revision to the road layout by Redrow would be seen and appreciated as a thoughtful and appropriate consideration for the wellbeing of the local residents and the public travelling on the A358 during the, no doubt, long drawn-out delivery of the development.

I should be grateful if your current proposals could be seriously reconsidered to the benefit of all and which would include significant cost savings to Redrow.

Yours sincerely

Michael Clark
CEng, FICE, FCIHT,
Past President of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.

Chairman, Staplegrove Parish Council