

STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL

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Dear Sir/Madam

Pubic consultation – future development of Staplegrove

Somerset County Council have confirmed that they have no plans for a Northern Outer Distributor Road and we understand that a Staplegrove Link Road might form a main spine route running east-west from Kingston Road to Staplegrove Road. Such a road would be totally funded by the development of land for housing located immediately north of the village and would reduce the traffic on the existing highway.

The principle existing east west route is along Manor Road/ Corkscrew Lane and it is much used by those traveling from the north east of Taunton and by those using the back way over the hill from Bridgwater that wish to commute to schools, the hospital, SCAT and the Park and Ride. The road is already heavily oversubscribed during peak periods and has just had additional traffic calming ‘pinch points and pillow humps’ installed to try to reduce the accidents that have also increased recently. Endeavours in the past to have a heavy vehicle prohibition order applied have been refused on the grounds that an alternative route would be too long a detour.

Hence the construction of a new through route would be seen as an improvement but the need for extensive house building to pay for it would not be at all welcome.

If a link road was to be constructed by developers it would no doubt normally be funded as and when the housing was sold and therefore it would be some considerable time before the whole of the through road was completed. This likelihood is heightened by the difficulty in arriving at a simple solution to the western end of such a route and we fear that a similar situation to that which still exists on the uncompleted Norton Fitzwarren bypass would occur. This would mean that all the additional traffic generated by the new housing so far completed would add to that already on Manor Road. We have asked Somerset County Council for information regarding the last traffic count on this road and made the point that recent extensive new housing constructed both east and west of Staplegrove have significantly increased the number of vehicles now travelling through the village. A new traffic survey would be necessary to reassure all concerned that the existing highway layout can safely and satisfactorily cater for the increases brought about by the housing developments.

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In addition, all this traffic travelling in both directions will use Staplegrove Road (at the Post Office traffic lights) which itself will be subject to substantial extra traffic resulting from the completion of the Northern Inner Distributor Road.

It is essential then, if there is to be housing development in some of the areas shown, that the through road should be completed in its entirety before housing construction begins. No doubt this would prove very difficult to achieve in the short term and hence, this 'is an overriding reason why the area identified as the Preferred Option for the urban extension at Staplegrove is not appropriate'.

In addition to the above we would list the following overriding reasons why development to the north of Staplegrove is to be strongly resisted:

This is prime agricultural land, a much needed resource for local farms, and an open area which affords glorious views to the Quantock hills to the north which together with the green wedges should, we feel, be preserved at all costs. This land contains an archaeological site and is crossed by pylons: two further reasons for deeming the land unsuitable for development.

And finally we realise that new houses bring with them a demand for more schools, new surgeries to provide adequate health care, and other amenities, such as shops and a community hall, all of which will cause more of this lovely land to be covered by urban sprawl.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Hayes
Chairman