

STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL

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Dear Ursula Fay and planning team,

A petition set up by Staplegrove Parish Council which objected to various aspects of the above two planning application has been rather curtailed by the corona virus pandemic but it did, none the less before lockdown, attract 440 signatures from people who called for and demanded:

1. THE REVERSION BACK TO A CROSS ROADS JUNCTION FOR THE SPINE ROAD WITH SILK MILLS ROAD --- NOT THREE HEAVILY TRAFFICKED JUNCTIONS
For an improved highway design with increased safety, less pollution and less cost.
2. THE COMPLETION OF THE NORTHERN LINK ROAD (SPINE ROAD) VERY EARLY ON
For reduced use of a drop-down road on to Corkscrew Lane, increased safety through the village and for children cycling to school.
3. BRING FORWARD THE EXTENSION OF THE NORTHERN ROAD EASTWARDS
For increased safety, less congestion, delay and pollution throughout Taunton

The above petition form was accompanied by the following explanations:

Why a Petition is needed

To object to various current aspects of the North Taunton Development

1. Concerns regarding the third road junction at the west end connection with the A358

The Promoters chose a connection point with the A358 just some 100m to the east of the existing Silk Mills junction and where a 6m deep cutting would be required to form the new road connection. There have been no substantive reasons, logistical or engineering, identified or given for this costly location and no justification has been forthcoming from SCC Highways for their having accepted this position. Nor were its many disadvantages explained to the previous Planning Committee before they granted this location outline permission.

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It can only be assumed that the Promoters may have wished to include the possibility of this section of the spine road as being able to be identified, later by the Developers, as being 'now no longer viable', thereby saving money and hence as an aid to them being able to sell their scheme more easily.

SCC Highways have indicated that the start of road construction work at this point would require the A358 to be closed for a period which would cause widespread disruption and delay.

The principle objection to this suggested location is the provision of a third, heavily trafficked junction, only some 100m from Silk Mills Road and with Cross Keys junction beyond. There is the requirement for these junctions to be controlled by a synchronised traffic light system, with adequate provision made for the safe, free flow movement of vehicles and cyclists. However, because of the lack of adequate space between the junctions, being only 60m of vehicle storage space between Silk Mills and the new Link road due to the need to provide for vehicles leaving Mill Lane, it will not always be possible for vehicles to obtain their correct traffic lane for their next change of direction, following each traffic light phase. This could lead to some congestion, delay and possible conflict between vehicles, with cyclist dangerously trying to manoeuvre in between, and all amongst the increased pollution being created by these phased delays. Synchronised, three junction, light systems are rarely a successful solution to cater for the many traffic movements to be covered and significant disruption is likely to be the result lasting long after the Developer has moved away.

However, significant cost and time savings could be made for the Developer by making a direct cross road connection with Silk Mills Road and a safer journey, through with less congestion and pollution would be achieved.

Unfortunately, it is now necessary for a revised planning application to be made to establish the original intention of the direct connection to Silk Mills Road but, with the Developers planning to start building the Link road at the middle of the development, there would be ample time for this to be obtained and very few objections are likely. The slight costs involved would be more than offset by the savings available because of easier engineering construction, spoil removal and the simpler traffic light scheme.

Also, lorries from the Slaughter House would exit more safely from Mill Lane on to the Distributor Road rather than on to the A358.

2. Concerns about the increased risk to cyclists by the prolonged use of the temporary connection to Corkscrew Lane

The Developers intend to make use of the permission they have for the temporary connection to Corkscrew Lane for up to 5 years or until 250 houses are occupied. Having originally stated that it would not be necessary to use the drop-down road for spine road construction traffic they now claim that it is essential with lorry loads of building materials, concrete and tarmac being delivered this way. However, the availability of a £7.2M loan from the District Council, via the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund, should ensure that the road can be completed in a much shorter time and the limit should certainly be for no more than the planned 173 houses within their phase 1a. The use of this drop-down road could be lessened by the provision of a second temporary access to the link road from Mill Lane before the direct connection to Silk Mills in the west. But even this time period can only worsen the current totally unsatisfactory safety conditions for those walking and cycling here and there is a definite requirement for a footpath to be established through the

northern side of this blind double bend immediately work begins. SCC Highways prepared a scheme for this in 2012.

Street lighting will also be required here.

3. Concerns at the east end connection to Kingston Road

Traffic travelling east arriving at the end of the Northern link Road will have an unenviable choice of either a left turn onto the narrow Kingston Road and on through to the village of Kingston St Mary to the Quantock Hills or, the perhaps more likely right turn to either, add to the congestion at the St Andrews gyratory system or, to find their way through many estate roads to the completed section of the original Northern Outer Distributor Road at Nerrols Drive. Both are very undesirable and hence the required extension across to Cheddon Road and then south through the protected route, through the currently underway developments, to join up with Nerrols Drive is very much a preferred option. It would mean crossing National Trust land but this land is, to quote from their pamphlet, 'investment land, that is, land that the National Trust can sell when the time is right to raise funds for the Trust's conservation work'. Whilst this is not a responsibility of the Developers it is a long-anticipated plan that should be brought to completion as soon as possible. It would provide a circular route from Wellington Road round west, north and east Taunton to the motorway for those wishing to avoid the heavy congestion which already exists in Town.

Please support this petition so that a better future can be assured by urging the Councils to require the current and future development to accord to the original requirements of the Policy TAU 2, whereby the safety, congestion and pollution issues are fully attended to and for disruption not to be the result for years to come.

Yours Sincerely,



pp Michael Clark
C Eng., FICE, FCIHT
Past President of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
Chairman, Staplegrove Parish Council'