

Comments to the Somerset Gazette on the housing development at Staplegrove.

The Parish is very disappointed by the vote of the Planning Committee after they had last time sensibly agreed to defer for more information to be provided on four aspects, principally covering the need for the drop down road. The Promoters, who no doubt want to get their job over and done with here and get on with the next one, succeeded in limiting the deferred period to only one month and then didn't offer any meaningful additional information. Their reduction of 50 houses using the drop down road actually means that the vehicles from these houses will use the first short section of spine road and Kingston Road and hence will be able to drive down Corkscrew Lane/Manor Road much more easily. They will not have to do the three point turn at Whitmore Lane, which the cars from the majority of the other 150 houses, who are forced to turn left out of the drop down road, will most certainly do.

Being the first new Garden town one would have thought that the Government would wish to see their maxim of *the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time* being definitely applied here and, if anything, would be more forthcoming with the grant for the complete spine road to be constructed first before any houses. The need is so essential here. It is certainly not right for the officers to say that a grant is more likely if planning permission has been given. In that case the permission granted must have secured some method of achieving affordable housing, in our case a reluctant 15%. With planning permission dependent on a grant being made and with a promise of 25% affordable housing given, then that would surely be a very much better bet for the grant. But for some reason it was not seen or pushed in that way. A two month wait until the end of the year was all that was expected for the outcome of the grant request to be known, not a very long period to wait in the overall scale of things. As was explained at the meeting, Taunton's need for affordable housing is already 32% and, if 15% is all that is offered here then it rises to an even higher percentage of all the new houses being built thereafter.

It was very noticeable that not one of the planning committee who voted in favour for the planning application participated in the debate. Their contribution would have been appreciated by the large number of people present at the meeting, those who are to be most directly affected by their votes, but the justification for their position and why they won't wait for the grant, was not forthcoming. A completed through spine road would solve most of the problems likely to be inflicted on north Taunton with the drop down road!

The ease with which developers seem to be able to get out of their obligations presents the very real risk that we will have all of the east end developed and say half of the west end when, all of a sudden, there will be some reason why the job can't be finished and the developers will disappear. We will then be stuck with no through spine road and an everlasting drop down road. Of course the traffic impact in Taunton will be severe well before that happens and will then steadily become even more gridlocked!

Highways showed a plan indicating the key areas where congestion issues will exist in 2028 resulting from all of the anticipated development plans for Taunton in the future. This, they said, was based on up to date, recently obtained figures. These areas are actually already congested, something all of Taunton is only too well aware of already; no need to wait until then! They are all the locations that they say are where improvements are required now to allow the Staplegrove development to start with 576 houses permitted to be built before the spine road is completed. But what will these junctions actually be like after the remaining 1052 houses here and those with the other developments planned elsewhere, are completed in eleven years' time?

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