

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Planning Committee to be held in The Castle School, Wellington Road, Taunton, TA1 5AU on 20 September 2017 at 18:30.

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### Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 13 September 2017 (to follow).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests  
To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, in relation to items on the agenda. Such interests need to be declared even if they have already been recorded in the Register of Interests. The personal interests of Councillors who are County Councillors or Town or Parish Councillors will automatically be recorded in the minutes.
- 5 34/16/0014 Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 915 residential units, a primary school, 1 ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping, woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect A358 Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road on land at Staplegrove Road on land at Staplegrove (East), Taunton
- 6 34/16/0007 Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for a residential-led, mixed use urban extension to include up to 713 dwellings, 1 ha of employment land comprising use classes B1 (a) (up to a maximum of 2500sqm), B1 (b), B1(c), B2, B8 together with green infrastructure, landscaping, play areas, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and associated works. An internal spine road is proposed to connect the A358 Staplegrove Road and Taunton Road at land at Staplegrove (West), Taunton

19 January 2018

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

**For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email [r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

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**Planning Committee Members:-**

Councillor R Bowrah, BEM (Chairman)  
Councillor M Hill (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor J Adkins  
Councillor M Adkins  
Councillor C Booth  
Councillor W Brown  
Councillor J Gage  
Councillor C Hill  
Councillor S Martin-Scott  
Councillor I Morrell, BA LLB  
Councillor S Nicholls  
Councillor J Reed  
Councillor N Townsend  
Councillor P Watson  
Councillor D Wedderkopp

PM ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD

**Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 915 residential units, a primary school, 1 ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping, woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect A358 Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road on land at Staplegrove (East), Taunton**

Location: STREET RECORD, STAPLEGROVE ROAD, STAPLEGROVE,  
TAUNTON

Grid Reference: 322058.127009

Outline Planning Permission

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## Recommendation

The decision to GRANT OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION be delegated to the Assistant Director Planning and Environment subject to the planning conditions recommended below and planning obligations under s106 to secure the following items to the Council's satisfaction:

- A minimum of 15% affordable housing
- Off site highway works at the following junctions
  - A358 site access signalised junction
  - Kingston Road site access signalised junction
  - Silk Mills signalised junction
  - Cross Keys signalised junction
  - Corkscrew Lane/Hope Corner Lane/Kingston Road junction improvement and signalisation
  - Improvements to Kingston Road Gyratory (Cheddon Road/Priorswood Road/St Andrews Road/Kingston Road/Greenway Road/Station Road/Station Approach)
  - Improvement measures for Gipsy Lane
  - Improvements to pedestrian links to Taunton Academy
- The down-grading of the temporary access to phase 1 housing off Corkscrew Lane to a pedestrian and cycle route only.
- A technology package (MOVA/SCOOT) for the following junctions
  - Silk Mills Junction
  - Development access on the A358
  - Cross keys Junction (if required)
  - Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Junction
- Traffic management works for Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane
- Travel Plan
- Improvements to bus services serving the site
- Delivery and timing of spine road
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular shortcuts

- On site pedestrian and cycle network
- Details of the land transfer arrangements for the required primary school site.
- The timing of access to a serviced school site for both construction and operational purposes
- Provision of land for on-site play equipment, sports facilities and allotments (in accordance with the Council's adopted standards).
- Management and maintenance of the proposed landscape woodland buffer and SUDS features.
- Relationship with the Staplegrave west application (LPA ref: 34/16/0007).
- A review mechanism to allow for more than 15% affordable housing, if the scheme becomes more profitable than currently argued or if the Council is successful in bids to the Government for funding under the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

*Should it not prove possible to agree these obligations the matter will need to be reported back to this Committee for further consideration.*

### **Recommended Conditions (if applicable)**

1. Approval of the details of the layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping of each phase of the Development (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development in that phase is commenced and the development of that phase shall (unless otherwise agreed with writing by the local planning authority) be carried out as approved. Application for approval of the reserved matters of the first phase shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Application for the final phase of the development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority not later than the expiration of ten years from the date of this permission. Each phase of the development hereby permitted shall be begun, not later than the expiration of two years from the final approval of the reserved matters for that phase, or in the case of approval on different dates, the final approval of the last such matter to be approved.

Reason: This is an outline permission and these matters have been reserved for the subsequent approval of the local planning authority in accordance with the provisions of S92 (2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by S51 (2) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. For those matters not reserved for later approval, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1005.E.001 Location Plan

1005.P.001 Illustrative Masterplan

ITL0047-SK-019 RD\_ Proposed amendments to Silk Mills Junction

0781-GA-045-RD\_ Kingston Road Site Access Signalised Junction Option

ITL10047-SK-029 RB\_Access from Corkscrew Lane Restricted Access Option 3

ITL10047-SK-031- Access from Corkscrew Lane Restricted Access

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. An application for approval of reserved matters shall not be submitted until there has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority a phasing and place-making strategy covering the general locations and phasing of the delivery of housing, infrastructure, transport links and community facilities within the whole Development. This strategy shall also include the timing and delivery of the agreed highway improvements. The Phasing Strategy shall set out information on how the delivery of these elements will be integrated through green infrastructure to ensure that a cohesive and high quality place is created. The strategy should identify any potential opportunities for the consultation with or the involvement of the local community or other stakeholders in the delivery and/or maintenance of community facilities. Thereafter each application for approval of reserved matters shall include an explanation of how the development of the phase or sub phase it covers relates to the phasing strategy of the overall Development. The development should be carried out in accordance with the approved phasing and placemaking strategy unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure comprehensive development in controlled phases and the creation of a high quality place, in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SS6 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

4. An application for approval of reserved matters for a phase or sub phase shall not be submitted until there has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority a Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide for the Neighbourhood Area to which that application for approval of reserved matters relates. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide shall be accompanied by a statement explaining how it accords with the Masterplan approved by this outline consent and the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief as approved by Taunton Deane Borough Council in December 2015. If they do not accord with these documents then reasons for this will need to be given. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide shall provide information on the proposed arrangement of development blocks, streets and spaces for the Neighbourhood Area to which they relate. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide should demonstrate how the Neighbourhood Area will function and explain its overall character and grain.

REASON: To ensure high standards of urban design and comprehensively planned development to accord with policies DM1 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (March 2012) and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

5. An application for approval of reserved matters shall not be submitted until there has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority, an Appearance Palette which includes the phase or sub phase to which that application for approval of reserved matters relates. The Appearance Palette shall include details of individual character areas, guidance on building design, building materials, surface materials, street furniture and tree species for the phase or sub phase to which it relates. Any subsequent revisions to an approved Appearance Palette shall be subject to the approval of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure high standards of urban design and comprehensively planned development to accord with policies DM1 and DM4 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (March 2012) and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

6. An application for approval of reserved matters which encompasses the area designated as the local centre, shall not be submitted until a Design Brief has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The Design Brief shall provide information on the principles for the detailed design of the following matters - areas of public open space and public realm, and the landscaping of those spaces; streets; buildings including the proposed approach to architectural design and material

REASON: To ensure high standards of urban design within the local centre in accordance with policies DM1 and DM4 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (March 2012) and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

7. No development hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the written scheme of archaeological investigation shall be implemented in accordance with its terms.

REASON: Areas of the site have been identified as of possible archaeological interest and therefore as requiring further archaeological investigation, excavation and recording proportionate to their significance, in accordance with section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

8. Prior to the commencement of each phase of the Development, with the exception of any required enabling works, earthworks and access, a foul water drainage strategy for that phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Wessex Water



acting as the sewerage undertaker. The foul water drainage strategy shall include appropriate arrangements for the agreed points of connection and the capacity improvements required to serve the phase to which it relates. The foul water drainage strategy shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details and to a timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that proper provision is made for sewerage of the site and that the development does not increase the risk of sewer flooding to downstream property, in accordance with policy DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

9. Prior to the commencement of each phase of the Development, with the exception of any required enabling works, earthworks and access, details of the surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles together with a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage strategy shall ensure that surface water runoff post development is attenuated on site and discharged at a rate of 2 l/s/ha or greenfield runoff rates, whichever rate is lower. Such works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. These details shall include: -
  - (a) Evidence that an appropriate right of discharge for surface water and any necessary improvements has been obtained;
  - (b) Details of the drainage during construction of that phase or sub phase and information of maintenance of drainage systems during construction of this phase;
  - (c) Information about the design storm period and intensity, discharge rates and volumes (both pre and post development), temporary storage facilities, means of access for maintenance (6 metres minimum), the methods employed to delay and control surface water discharged from the site, and the measures taken to prevent flooding and pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters;
  - (d) Any works required off site to ensure adequate discharge of surface water without causing flooding or pollution (which should include refurbishment of existing culverts and headwalls or removal of unused culverts where relevant);
  - (e) Identification of all future land-use limitations, ownership, operation and maintenance arrangements for the works over the lifetime of the scheme;
  - (f) Flood water exceedance routes both on and off site, note, no part of the site must be allowed to flood during any storm up to and including the 1 in 30 event, flooding during storm events in excess of this including the 1 in 100yr (plus 30% allowance for climate change) must be controlled within the designed exceedance routes demonstrated to prevent flooding or damage to properties;
  - (g) A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development

which shall include the arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management company or maintenance by a Residents' Management Company and / or any other arrangements to secure the operation and maintenance to an approved standard and working condition throughout the lifetime of the development;

(h) An agreed timetable for delivery.

The approved scheme shall meet the requirements of both the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling of each phase it shall be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that relevant parts of the scheme have been completed in accordance with the details and timetable agreed. The scheme shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and more generally sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015), policies CP1 (c & f) and CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012) and policy I4 of the Taunton Deane adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

10. No phase or sub phase of development shall commence (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental and Traffic Management Plan for that phase or sub phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. In discharging this condition the following information shall be supplied:
  - (a) Locations for the storage of all plant, machinery and materials including oils and chemicals to be used in connection with the construction of that phase or sub phase;
  - (b) Construction vehicle routes to and from site including any off site routes for the disposal of excavated material;
  - (c) Construction delivery hours;
  - (d) Expected number of construction vehicles per day;
  - (e) Car parking for contractors;
  - (f) A scheme to encourage the use of Public Transport amongst contractors; and
  - (g) Measures to avoid traffic congestion impacting upon the Strategic Road network.
  - (h) Details of all bunds, fences and other physical protective measures to be placed on the site including the time periods for placing and retaining such measures;
  - (i) The control and removal of spoil and wastes;
  - (j) A scheme of measures to prevent the pollution of surface and ground water arising from the storage of plant and materials and other

construction activities; the scheme should include details of the following:

- Site security.
  - Fuel oil storage, bunding, delivery and use.
  - How both minor and major spillage will be dealt with.
  - Containment of silt/soil contaminated run-off.
  - Disposal of contaminated drainage, including water pumped from excavations.
  - Site induction for workforce highlighting pollution prevention and awareness. Invitation for tenders for sub-contracted works must include a requirement for details of how the above will be implemented.
- (k) The proposed hours of operation of construction activities;
- (l) The frequency, duration and means of operation involving demolitions, excavations, drilling, piling, and any concrete production;
- (m) Sound attenuation measures incorporated to reduce noise at source;
- (n) Details of measures to be taken to reduce the generation of dust; and
- (o) Specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice
- (p) Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS]

The agreed Construction Environmental and Traffic Management Plan shall thereafter be implemented in full.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety, to protect the amenities of nearby properties during the construction of the Development and to protect the natural and water environment from pollution in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

11. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, then no further development shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority to, a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

REASON: To protect controlled waters in accordance with policy CP8 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

12. Applications for Reserved Matters approval shall include a hard and soft landscaping scheme for the phase or sub phase of the Development to which it relates. The hard and soft landscaping scheme shall include for the phase or sub phase to which it relates details of the landscaping; details of the surface treatment of the open parts of the site; a programme of implementation; and a planting schedule include numbers, density, size, species and positions of all new trees and shrubs. The landscaping/planting scheme shown on the submitted plan shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development phase.

REASON: To ensure provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme, and to ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policies CP8 and DM1 of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Strategy.

13. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, or at such other time as agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: To ensure provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme, and to ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policies CP8 and DM1 of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Strategy.

14. Before each phase of the Development is commenced the following shall in respect of that phase be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:
  - (a) A plan showing the location of and allocating a reference number to each existing tree on the part of the site within that phase which has a stem with a diameter, measured over the bark at a point 1.5 metres above ground level, exceeding 75 mm, showing which trees are to be retained, the crown spread of each retained tree and which are to be removed;
  - (b) Details of the species, height, trunk diameter at 1.5m above ground level, age, vigour, canopy spread and root protection area of each tree identified in the plan prepared pursuant to paragraph (a);
  - (c) Details of any proposed topping or lopping of any retained tree, or of any tree on land adjacent to the site;
  - (d) Details of any proposed alterations in existing ground levels, and of the position of any proposed excavation, [within the crown spread of any retained tree or of any tree on land adjacent to the site;
  - (e) Details of the specification and position of fencing and of any other measures to be taken for the protection of any retained tree from damage before or during the course of development.

The development of that phase shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the plan referred to in paragraph (a) above.

REASON: To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely impact upon the landscape quality or the value of important tree groups in accordance with Policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

15. No works (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) shall be commenced on any phase of the development hereby permitted until details of a wildlife strategy (incorporating an Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS] and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [LEMP]) to protect and enhance that phase of the development for wildlife has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Strategy shall demonstrate how the long-term conservation of new and retained environmental resources, including habitats and species of biodiversity value, shall be secured and shall include arrangements for implementation responsibilities for the operation of the Strategy following completion of development of each phase or sub phase of the development. It will need to meet the requirements of any Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licences. The strategy shall be based on the advice of all the submitted landscape and ecology reports to date including those contained within the Environmental Statement (dated February 2016) including the Ecological Report submitted by Wildwood Ecology (dated November 2013), the Pyrland Hall Farm Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Wildwood Ecology, February 2014), the protected species survey - bats (Wildwood Ecology, August 2015), the Pyrland Hall Estate protected species survey - bats (Wildwood Ecology, February 2014), the 'Results of a climbing survey for bats at Staplegrove', by Andrews Ecology (dated July 2015), the Great Crested Newt Survey Report and Outline Mitigation Strategy by Wildwood Ecology (dated July 2015), the Dormouse Survey Report (Wildwood Ecology, December 2015), the Badger Survey Report (Wildwood Ecology, December 2014), the Breeding Birds Survey (Wildwood Ecology, July 2015), the Environmental Statement Addendum (dated December 2016) and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (May 2016), and any other up to date surveys and include -
1. An Ecological Construction Method Statement (ECMS) containing details of protective measures to include method statements to avoid impacts on all wildlife especially protected species during all stages of development;
  2. Details of measures to prevent pollution of all water courses on or near the site
  3. Details of the timing of works to avoid periods of work when protected species could be harmed by disturbance.
  4. Arrangements to secure an Ecological Clerk of Works on site.
  5. Measures for the enhancement of places of rest for protected species.
  6. Details of a sensitive lighting strategy.
  7. Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.
  8. A commitment to commence planting of replacement habitat no later than day one of each phase of the development.

The Strategy shall cover management of the whole site in perpetuity from completion of the works and once approved the works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timing of the works. No part of the development on the phase concerned shall be occupied until the scheme for the maintenance and provision of the mitigation planting and maintenance

of the hibernacula, bat, dormice and bird boxes and related accesses have been fully implemented. Thereafter the new planting and the wildlife resting places and agreed accesses shall be permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [LEMP] and an Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS] are required to ensure that valued ecological features are not harmed by the Development as the habitats need to be maintained functionally for the life of the development in order that Favourable Conservation Status of the affected populations is maintained, and to ensure net gains in biodiversity are delivered in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Taunton Deane adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028. This is also a requirement of the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

16. No more than 12 months prior to the commencement of works on a phase of the Development in which breeding sites or resting places of European Protected Species may be present, updated surveys for that phase shall be undertaken. The species in question include but are not necessarily limited to:
- (a) Bats;
  - (b) Dormice;
  - (c) Great crested newts; and
  - (d) Otters

The survey results shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority together with details of any required mitigation measures and the appropriate mechanism for delivery of such measures.

REASON: In the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

17. A habitat enhancement area of a minimum of either 10.92 hectares or 10.39 hectares of replacement habitat will be required depending on whether i) the Staplegrove West application does not come forward or ii) with a Staplegrove West application receiving permission respectively, in accordance with the agreed Habitat Regulations Assessment (May 2016). The replacement habitat shall be of accessible woodland, ponds and species rich meadow is created, which is accessible to lesser horseshoe bats. The layout of and a planting schedule for the habitat creation / enhancement of this open space will be submitted to and agreed with Taunton Deane Borough Council prior to work commencing on site (apart from any associated enabling works, earthworks and/or access). This enhancement will be planted at the first available planting season (October to March) following permission unless otherwise agreed with the Borough Council.

REASON: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with the National Planning Policy

Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

18. A bat house for lesser horseshoe bats will be constructed on the northern boundary, prior to any work commencing on site. The design and location of the bat roost shall first have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and shall remain in place at all times thereafter.

REASON: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment In the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

19. Before any development takes place, the northern and western boundary hedgerows shall be retained in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, giving the position, species and health of all such hedgerows and where necessary details of planting to infill existing gaps. These hedgerows shall then remain in accordance with these details and any parts of the hedgerow which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

20. Once the first phase of development has commenced, ecological monitoring of the whole site, for a period of time to be agreed between the Local Planning Authority and the applicant, shall be undertaken.

REASON: To ensure that the long-term management of the site is informed, to identify where the existing maintenance regime requires modification, to assess the efficacy of the EPS licenses and also to comply with the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

21. The proposals hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the approved Habitats Regulations Assessment. Where further information is specified to be provided by any of these requirements, this information shall have been provided to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before the relevant part(s) of the development is/are commenced and shall include a timetable for implementation of the measures. The agreed works shall then be implemented in full strictly in accordance with the approved plans and/or documentation and remain as such at all times thereafter.

REASON: Natural England concludes that the Test of Likely Significance (“Habitats Regulations Assessment”) has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC. Natural England agrees with the conclusions in the HRA and supports them. However, they conclude that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC. On this basis, if these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and Natural England would object on that basis.

22. No external lighting shall be placed on site or operated in any phase of the Development until a Lighting Strategy for Biodiversity for that phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall incorporate the following measures -
- (a) Identify those areas/features of the site within that phase or sub phase that are particularly sensitive for bats, dormice and otters and that are vulnerable to light disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging;
  - (b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications showing Lux levels down to an agreed level) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.
  - (c) Street lighting will be directed so as to avoid light spillage and pollution on habitats used by light sensitive bats and other species. The applicant will demonstrate that all bat corridors and feeding habitat will not exceed the level of illumination to be agreed, which should be the recommended light level for horseshoe bats in corridors through development (Natural England, 2010) and 0.5 Lux where falling on other wildlife habitats. Shields and other methods of reducing light spill will be used where necessary to achieve the required light levels;
  - (d) Lighting will be of the soft white LED type with optics that are highly directional;
  - (e) Paths within the enhanced habitat areas will not be lit as these are primarily designed to replace the value of the habitat lost that would otherwise constitute a potential significant effect on the Hestercombe House SAC.
  - (f) Properties with gardens adjacent to habitat used by lesser horseshoe bats shall have their boundaries fixed with a 1.8m high closed boarded fence to minimise incidental light spill from uncontrolled lighting and to prevent removal of habitat to extend gardens.
  - (g) There will be no routine night-time working during the construction stage of the development.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy and shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy at all times thereafter.

REASON: In order to minimise the effects on bats and other light sensitive



creatures in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005, Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (May 2016).

23. The proposed estate roads, footways, footpaths, tactile paving, cycleways, bus stops/bus laybys, verges, junctions, street lighting, sewers, drains, retaining walls, service routes, surface water outfall, vehicle overhang margins, embankments, visibility splays, accesses, carriageway gradients, drive gradients, car, motorcycle and cycle parking and street furniture shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing, before their construction begins. For this purpose, plans and sections, indicating as appropriate, the design, layout, levels, gradients, materials and method of construction shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority before the commencement of each phase (or sub-phase) of the development.

REASON: To ensure the provision of appropriate access and highway safety for all road users and pedestrians in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

24. The proposed roads, including footpaths and where applicable turning spaces and cycle way connections, shall be constructed in such a manner as to ensure that each dwelling, before it is occupied, shall be served by a properly consolidated and surfaced footpath and carriageway to at least base course level between the dwelling and existing highway.

REASON: To ensure the provision of appropriate access and highway safety for all road users and pedestrians in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

25. Construction of the internal Spine Road is to be completed in full within 5 years of the first occupation or a maximum of 326 of the residential units hereby approved, being occupied, whichever is achieved first. No individual phase of the development shall be occupied or brought into use until the part of the Spine Road that provides access to that phase has been constructed in accordance with plans that shall previously have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that the spine road will eventually link between the two approved points of access into the urban extension, which it has been established is required in order to prevent traffic congestion and danger on the highway elsewhere on the local road network, particularly along Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane and in Taunton town centre. This is in accordance with policy CP6 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

26. In the interests of sustainable development none of the dwellings in the first phase (as will be agreed by condition 3 of this permission) shall be used or occupied until a network of cycleway and footpath connections has been

constructed within the development site as a whole in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of sustainable development and to encourage movement by means other than the motor vehicle in accordance with the principles within the National Planning Policy Guidance and policies SD1, CP1, CP6, CP7, SP1 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

27. In relation to the Spine Road, any access shall ensure that there shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 300 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 43 metres either side of the access. Such visibility shall be fully provided before any junction(s) with the Spine Road is/(are) brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.

REASON: In order to ensure that any future accesses onto or from the spine road have adequate visibility, in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Authority, to ensure accordance with the County Council's standing orders on highway design and in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

28. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied prior to the implementation of the approved Travel Plan. Those parts of the approved Travel Plan that are identified therein as being capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained therein.

REASON: To ensure that the development offers a wide range of travel choices to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment.

29. Before the completion of the proposed spine road, traffic calming measures for Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall then be implemented in full, in accordance with the approved scheme(s) and remain in place in full working order as approved at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure an improved flow and speed of traffic along this road.

30. No part of the development hereby approved shall include B1(a) office development as defined by the 'Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

REASON: To limit weekday peak hour employment development trips to a level for which the M5 Junction 25 capacity has been tested. To ensure the safe and effective operation of the strategic road network.

31. No dwelling in any phase or sub-phase hereby permitted, shall be occupied until footpath connections have been constructed within the phase or sub-phase in accordance with a scheme that shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of sustainable development, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Guidance and policies DM1 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

32. No development shall commence on any phase until a proposed layout scheme to include the provision of access to other parts of the Staplegrove site as identified in policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocation and Development Management Plan, has been submitted for approval in writing to the Local Planning Authority. The layout scheme will be in a form that is adequate to accommodate public transport, vehicles, cycleways and footpath linkages for the future development of the Staplegrove site. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to ensure that other land that may come forward for development within the parameters of policy TAU2 of the Site Allocation and Development Management Plan are not unduly prejudiced.

33. The applicant shall ensure that all construction vehicles leaving the site are in such condition as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. In particular (but without prejudice to the foregoing), efficient means shall be installed, maintained and employed for cleaning the wheels of all lorries leaving the site, details of which shall have been agreed in advance in writing by the Local Planning Authority and fully implemented prior to commencement of development and thereafter maintained until the site has been fully completed.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure environmental protection.

## Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and entered into pre-application discussions to enable the grant of planning permission.
2. WILDLIFE AND THE LAW . The protection afforded to wildlife under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and any activity undertaken on the tree(s) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

BREEDING BIRDS. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and if discovered must not be disturbed. If works are to be carried out during the breeding season (from February to August, possibly later) then the tree(s) should be checked for nesting birds before work begins.

BATS. The applicant and contractors must be aware that all bats are fully protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012, also known as the Habitat Regulations. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to structures or places of shelter or protection used by bats, or to disturb bats whilst they are using these places.

Trees with features such as rot holes, split branches or gaps behind loose bark, may be used as roost sites for bats. Should a bat or bats be encountered while work is being carried out on the tree(s), work must cease immediately and advice must be obtained from the Government's advisers on wildlife, Natural England (Tel. 0845 1300 228). Bats should preferably not be handled (and not unless with gloves) but should be left in situ, gently covered, until advice is obtained.

3. The condition relating to wildlife requires the submission of information to protect species. The Local Planning Authority will expect to see a detailed method statement for each phase of the development clearly stating how wildlife and their habitats will be protected through the development process and to be provided with a mitigation proposal that will maintain favourable status for these species that are affected by this development proposal.
4. Dormice, bats and possibly great crested newts are known to use the site as identified in submitted ecological surveys. The species concerned are European Protected Species within the meaning of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. If the local population of European Protected Species are affected in a development, a licence must be obtained from Natural England in accordance with the above regulations. Natural England requires that the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that derogation from the Habitats Directive is justified prior to issuing such a licence. It should be noted that approval of this outline application, does not mean that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

5. It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and the developer should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.
6. Nesting birds are present on site and all operatives on site must be appropriately briefed on their potential presence. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and if discovered must not be disturbed.
7. The applicant is hereby advised to note that the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Avon and Somerset Police would be pleased to work with them at the detailed design stage in order to 'design out' crime and disorder in this major mixed use redevelopment.
8. The applicants are advised to formulate all physical security specifications of the dwellings i.e. doorsets, windows, security lighting, intruder alarm, cycle storage etc. in accordance with the police approved 'Secured by Design' award scheme, full details of which are available on the SBD website – [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)
9. Development, insofar as it affects Public Rights Of Way, should not be started until, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until, the necessary (stopping up/diversion) Order has come into effect. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with.
10. The health and safety of walkers must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of the footpath, but only to a standard suitable for pedestrians. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of the footpath resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.
11. If it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from Somerset County Council Rights of Way Group.
  - A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
  - New furniture being needed along a PROW.
  - Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
  - Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW .

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would make a PROW less convenient for continued public use (or) create a hazard to users of a PROW then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided.

## Proposal

This application seeks outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 915 residential units, a primary school, 1 ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping, woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect A358 Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road on land at Staplegrove (East), Taunton.

This application is known as the Staplegrove (east) proposal because it sits alongside the concurrent application for Staplegrove (west). The two proposals together comprise the Staplegrove urban extension that is referenced in planning policy SS6 of the adopted Core Strategy and which is further detailed in policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. In order to ensure a comprehensive masterplanning process, the applicant has been working jointly with the promoters for the western part of the allocation site. This collaborative approach is intended to ensure the comprehensive planning and delivery of the site ensuring the timely delivery of the spine road and other key supporting infrastructure. The delivery of the internal spine road and its associated access points is a key requirement of both the masterplans for the east and west parts of the site. In recognition of this and to take a precautionary approach in the unlikely scenario whereby one or other of the applications does not come forward, the full length of the spine road has been included in both the planning applications (together with its associated works such as drainage and buffer planting). Furthermore, the Environmental Impact Assessment has addressed both the scenarios of 'Comprehensive Development' whereby both the applications come forward together and also a sensitivity test scenario, referred to as 'Without Staplegrove west' which addresses the unlikely scenario that the western part of the application does not come forward within the same timeframe.

The application submission includes the following documents –

- Planning Statement;
- Affordable Housing Statement
- Design and Access Statement;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- CIL additional information form;
- S.106 Draft Heads of Terms;
- Environmental Reports which constitute an Environmental Statement (ES) are required because the proposal is EIA development. They comprise:
  - o Ecological Reports;
  - o Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
  - o Lighting Assessment;
  - o Transport Assessment;
  - o Travel Plan;
  - o Open Space Strategy
  - o Green Infrastructure Strategy;
  - o Heritage Assessment
  - o Heritage Mitigation Strategy
  - o Ground Investigation Report;

- o Noise Assessment;
- o Air Quality Assessment;
- o Agricultural Land Assessment;
- o Arboricultural Survey
- o Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- o Draft Tree Protection Plan; and
- o Flood Risk Assessment.

The proposals for Staplegrove east aim to provide a sustainable new community comprising of housing as well as employment land, new public spaces and facilities for the community within a landscape-led environment. As such, the proposal includes new areas of public open space, parks, cycle and pedestrian routes, children's play areas and a multi-use sports pitch. The development is proposed to be bordered by woodland buffer planting and retained hedgerows to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape as well as providing a range of ecological features to support local species.

In November 2016, the applicants submitted a viability assessment in support of their application. They maintained that Staplegrove east has a number of constraints and abnormal costs that contributed to it not being a typical development site which have, therefore, impacted on the site's viability. The submitted viability report tested several scenarios, most of which showed deficits in their appraisals. The end result was that the applicant has made a case for proceeding with the application on the basis of providing 10% affordable housing with a 50/50 tenure split. The Council has had the figures and assessments independently checked.

In December 2016, amendments were made to proposed masterplan. These were as follows:

- The proposed Kingston Road roundabout, which connected the Spine Road to Kingston Road has been removed and replaced with a signalised junction;
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, north of Clifford Avenue, has now been removed and replaced with a cycle-only access;
- The addition of a vehicular connection road from the Spine Road to the residential parcel north of Corkscrew Lane;
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, south of the green wedge, has now been removed.

The following chapters of the original Environmental Statement have been updated to reflect these changes. However the overall conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment remain the same:

- Chapter 7 Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Chapter 9 Lighting
- Chapter 10 Transport and Access
- Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 18 Summary of Effects and Conclusions
- Non-Technical Summary.

In addition the following further technical information has been prepared since the applications were submitted and has been included within the technical appendices:

- Chapter 1 Introduction:
  - Explanatory notes of cumulative sites assessment
- Chapter 7 Ecology and Nature Conservation:
  - Updated Staplegrove East Bat Survey
- Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual Impact
  - Updated Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plans
- Chapter 10 Transport and Access:
  - Updated Transport Assessment Addendum
  - Updated Travel Plan
  - Updated Technical Appendices



## Site Description

The application site for Staplegrove east covers an area of approximately 79.96 hectares, which includes 69.08 hectares of land proposed for the Staplegrove East development and 10.88 hectares for the section of Spine Road that lies to the west of Staplegrove East. The Application Site lies to the north of Corkscrew Lane, approximately 2.5km northwest of Taunton Town Centre. The site is located on agricultural land comprising irregularly shaped and sized fields that are generally enclosed by mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees and woodland. The main body of the application site is bounded by Dodhill Road in the north; the parkland of Pyrland Estate (now partly owned and managed by Kings Hall School) to the east; Kingston Road traverses the eastern area of the Application Site, running in a broadly north-south alignment; Whitmore Lane traverses the western area, also following a broadly north-south alignment; winding lanes including Hope Corner Lane and Corkscrew Lane to the south; and in part a public footpath to the west (Manor Road to Smoky Farm PROW T24-15). The Staplegrove west site lies immediately to the west. The land abuts the urban edge of Taunton and the village of Staplegrove to the south and there are isolated properties occur along Kingston Road and Whitmore Lane.

The landform of the site generally falls from east to west from a high point of approximately 46 metres above Ordnance datum (AOD) adjacent to Kingston Road in the north-east to 40 metres AOD on land between Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Lane. The northern most part of the site (proposed Bat mitigation tree belts) lies approximately 1.5km to the south of the Quantock Hills AONB at its nearest point.

Pyrland Hall, now a school, is Grade II\* Listed and lies approximately 300m to the northeast of the site. Staplegrove Conservation Area lies about 400m to the southwest of the application site at its closest point. Other heritage assets within or in close proximity to the site include Okehills which is Grade II Listed to the west of Kingston Road, and the Grade II Listed Hope Corner House c.50m to the southeast. The Application Site is not subject to any other statutory or non-statutory designation.

A water course known as Mill Lease stream runs parallel with, and to the southeast of Whitmore Lane, running south from Okehills into Staplegrove village. The majority of the land lies within Flood Zone 1, but land along the stream falls within Flood Zone 3. No other watercourses occur within the Application Site, but several ponds occur and the agricultural land is drained by a network of ditches. A drainage ditch and cluster of ponds lie adjacent to the eastern boundary within land associated with Pyrland Hall.

Vehicular access is provided from Corkscrew Lane to the south, linking to Whitmore Lane and Kingston Road. The western boundary of the site is formed by a Public Right of Way and Kingston Road dissects the eastern third of the parcel, with Whitmore Lane dividing the land to the west. The remainder of the land is privately owned and is not accessible to the public.

The northern area of the application site is traversed by three high voltage overhead power lines supported on steel lattice pylons that cross the landscape along a southwest to northeast corridor. A localised network of low voltage overhead lines occur in the southwest corner of the Application Site.

A water main runs in a north-south alignment to the east of Whitmore Lane, with a spur extending toward the eastern boundary of the Application Site from the rear of agricultural buildings off Whitmore Lane. A gas main occurs in the northwest corner of the Application Site, running in a southwest to northeast direction from Whitmore Lane beneath the northernmost high voltage power line.

## Relevant Planning History

This current proposal arises from the Framework Masterplan which was considered by Full Council at their meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015. It was resolved that:-

(1) The North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief be agreed as the basis for development with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the junction between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application; and that

(2) Officers write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-

(i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;

(ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists;

(iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;

(iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;

(v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development;

(vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;

(vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;

(viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;

(ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and

(x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

As adopted Council policy, the Masterplan and the associated recommendations now form a material consideration for any planning application on the Staplegrove broad location site.

Also relevant is the Staplegrove (west) application, which is concurrent and is detailed on this agenda under LPA reference 34/16/0007. This proposal seeks Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for a residential-led, mixed-use urban extension to include up to 713 dwellings, 1ha of employment land

comprising use classes B1 (a) (up to a maximum of 2500sqm), B1 (b), B1 (c), B2, B8 together with green infrastructure, landscaping, play areas, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect Kingston Road to the A358 Staplegrove Road on land at Staplegrove (west), Taunton.

# Consultation Responses

## STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL

(Original comments dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016) –

The key element in the proposed North Taunton Development, which is covered by the reference numbers above, is the provision of the spine road. The spine road will '*connect the development to the wider transport network via a controlled junction at Staplegrove Road and a roundabout at Kingston Road*' and in doing so the following matters need to be borne in mind for a successful outcome to be achieved.

1. The only connecting roadway existing at present between the two roads is Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane and this is a narrow, winding country lane which passes through the centre of the village and its conservation area of 14 No. Grade II listed structures. It consists of a carriageway, hardly 5.5m wide in places, with four double bends three of which are virtually blind, with no accompanying footways. Two of these are signed for a maximum speed of 20mph. In an effort to control the inappropriate speed of much of the traffic using the road at present two single track pinch-points have been installed, together with pillow humps. More of both are currently needed.

The lane serves as a cycle route for students attending Taunton Academy, as well as those wishing to access Taunton Vale Sports Club, Staplegrove Sports Club and the Junior Football Club. However, the road is currently overwhelmed at commuting and school collection times, with traffic backed up some 500m or more due to the limited movement provided by the traffic signals at the junction with Staplegrove Road. This has been highlighted in very many of the comments submitted by the public during the consultation periods and will be worse when the NIDR finally opens.

Because of all of this your TDBC Policy TAU2 sets out, very correctly, that the masterplan should provide for the '*Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road other than for local access*'. Also, that it should '*...achieve a significant shift to more sustainable forms of transport including, within residential areas, a maximum 20mph design speed....*'. The aim of this is to try to return to and retain as much as possible of the rural atmosphere and heritage of the village of Staplegrove, even when it is to be surrounded by a vastly increased number of new dwellings. Staplegrove Parish Council therefore expects a 20mph speed limit and a weight restriction order to apply to Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road as soon as the spine road is usable. Hopefully, there will then not be a need for more pinch points.

2. The Parish Council have, from the very beginning of consultations on this development, stated that the spine road should be completed before any house building takes place. The promoters are reluctant to accept this and have, not surprisingly, suggested that this is not possible. The Parish Council have said that if that is the case then building should be commenced at both ends of the spine road to keep construction and other increased traffic away from the existing country lane and the village.

3. None the less, Ptarmigan, the promoters of the west end of the development, in their application, seek permission to start building 200 dwellings at the east end of their area, by gaining access via a temporary drop down road connecting with Corkscrew Lane adjacent to Village World. The estimated time duration for this work

and the temporary connection is given by them as being between 2018 and 2024! PM Asset Management, the promoters of the east end, are claiming that the spine road will be completed as part of their Phase 1a within 2 years and hence, it will then also be available to Ptarmigan and their 200 dwellings. However, PMAM have gone further and show a permanent traffic connection for 55 dwellings at the same site. In addition, they also plan to have an additional 139 houses which exiting only on to Corkscrew Lane opposite Clifford Avenue. Both of these sites are in their Phase 2 by when the spine road will have been completed. The 55 dwellings about a new housing area only 40 metres or so from the spine road to the north. The 139 houses have a pedestrian and cycle to the north which passes through the belt of trees via an existing wide trackway with field gate. This could easily be widened slightly to take an estate road connection to the spine road as the only vehicular exit and additional trees plant as compensation. If these 194 new dwellings were allowed such access on to Corkscrew Lane then they would more than double the number of the existing 158 homes that make up the village at present. This should most positively not be the permitted!

The original planning statement said that all the new housing would only be connected to the spine road but PMAM describe the spine road as '*an alternative through route to Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane*'! The Parish Council objects most strongly to the above interpretation. It is not at all in agreement with the TAU2 Policy of '*closure*' quoted, a policy position that has been re-confirmed at the full TDBC Council meeting in December 2015. These three sites must all connect directly to the spine road which can easily be achieved.

4. The sensible objective is to take Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane back to the quiet peaceful county lane it always used to be and have it available for walking, running and cycling, both for the new and existing householders, with vehicular access limited to the current 158 homes. There would then be at least some small return to the villagers of Staplegrove for the dramatic change of life which this development would impose upon them.

5. But do we actually need all these extra units? North Staplegrove started off as an area to be used to make up any shortfall in sites for houses, only then to be included in the Core Strategy for between 500 and 1500 and now we find that some 1628 are being proposed. With the job opportunities in Taunton having fallen away rather than growing as originally assumed, it would make good sense to reassess the current need and to site the next tranche of house building nearer to the extensive employment area, now funded, close to the motorway at junction 25. This revision would determine a different level of development going forward at Staplegrove.

6. The spine road is also required to provide for a future extension eastwards for a new northern link road round North Taunton. Such a road was planned years ago and has been partly constructed. It is urgently needed now for those on the west who wish to use the motorway or to travel further east without having to pass through the town centre and add to the very apparent traffic problems that exist there. PMAM's plans show a safeguarded route pointing to the north east for the future link to pass north of Pyrland Hall. This no doubt would require yet another vast development to fund such a lengthy ring road and would not start until the Staplegrove development was well advanced and hence take very many years to complete. A ring road extension is wanted now and should be built as soon as possible. It should follow the original line of the NODR from the roundabout at Kingston Road across to Cheddon Road and on to connect up with the already completed section at Nerrols Drive and

to the extensions onwards planned at Crown roundabout. This would cause only very slight damage to Pyrland Estate if no housing bordered the road at this point and would also provide a much more satisfactory route to Taunton Academy and Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

7. Because this future outer ring road will join up with the existing Silk Mills Road bypass round west Taunton, the connection with it at the A358 must be at the planned improved signalled junction replacing the existing roundabout and not at a further set of traffic signals just some 100m nearer to Staplegrove. Such a junction would only be a short term expedient and a waste of what money is currently available.

8. Strong planning conditions [rigorously enforced] must be made to any approval given to ensure that the development would proceed in the above manner.

In addition to our concerns with the highway infrastructure planning of this scheme, which were sent to you in a letter dated 30th May 2016, Staplegrove Parish Council has serious worries about the suitability, deliverability and viability of this North Taunton Development proposal.

These concerns include;

- a) The total number of houses and their effect on the delivery of school places for primary and secondary education,
- b) GP surgery overload and its impact on Musgrove Park Hospital and
- c) The risk to health from electro-magnetic fields where the high voltage overland power lines are relayed underground.

a) In support of our concern over the total number of houses proposed we draw your attention to the Core Strategy Chapter 5, Strategic Sites and Broad Locations, paragraph 5.3' which states, *"The Core Strategy adopts an overall approach that is robust and flexible. The assumed annual increase in GVA of 2.8%, results in an allocation of land for development somewhat in excess of historic trends. Conversely, if growth occurs at a lower rate, this can be allowed for by delaying development in the areas such as Staplegrove and Comeytrowe which are identified as broad locations"*.

Could you therefore tell us please if a lower rate of growth has occurred since the inception of the Core Strategy and whether the Council will, in the light of your answer, implement this paragraph of the Core Strategy?

With regard to school places are you able to ensure that SCC builds the proposed primary school before the end of the development as the existing primary schools cannot take any more pupils? Asking schools to increase the size of classes will only prejudice the education of existing pupils in Staplegrove.

b) Health England's policy to only build a new GP surgery for a minimum of 10,000 patients i.e. 6 GP's and 2 nurses, means that new residents of the proposed North Taunton Development will have to join existing surgeries.

This will only exacerbate the current problems which existing residents have in seeking appointments with their doctor. It prompts the alternative of them frequently arriving at the A and E Department at Musgrove Park Hospital which is already under pressure, particularly in the winter months.

c) Finally, our concern is also over the risk to health from electro-magnetic fields

from the relaying of the existing overhead power lines underground. Grounding the power lines in fact exacerbates the effects of electro-magnetic fields on members of the public by being closer to the cables which are at a much shallower depth compared to the height they are when sited above ground.

We believe that assurances from SCC regarding educational provision, consultation with the local NHS providers and further consultation with Western Power Distribution are essential before the planning application is considered by the Planning Committee. This should ensure that existing and future residents of Staplegrove are not disadvantaged or put at risk.

*(Further comments received 6th June 2016)*

Staplegrove Parish Council has serious worries about the increased likelihood of flooding in various places due to this North Taunton Development proposal. Flooding has occurred fairly regularly in Lawn Road, at Hillhead Cottages in Rectory Road and to the sports field of Staplegrove Sports Club, due to run-off from the fields to the north during pronounced wet weather. Similarly, flooding at the junction between Whitmore Lane and Corkscrew Lane is perhaps a more frequent event, once again due to the run-off from the fields sloping down to the road from both east and west. This has been known to produce treacherous conditions on freezing nights.

It is recognized that precautions are planned to be designed to cater for the increased occurrence of flooding caused by the proposed schemes with the provision of attenuation ponds and Sustainable Drainage System techniques. We look to the Flood Risk Drainage Officer to confirm that these provisions have been satisfactorily designed to prevent the increased likelihood of flooding taking place in the future, should these two outline applications be granted.

The extension to the existing Green Wedge is located alongside Whitmore Lane and, perhaps more importantly, the adjacent Mill Lease Stream and should be as stipulated in the SADMP. This includes areas of Flooding Zone 3 ground which is unsuitable for housing. We are particularly concerned that the promoters have indicated that they wish to restrict the intended width of the Green Wedge by constructing estates on both the east and west edges. Not only does this reduce the principal purpose of the wedge of maintaining the identity and open character of the area for the health and wellbeing of the residents, but also increases the difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory method of flood prevention. This restricted width is very strongly opposed by the Parish Council.

The SADMP adopted an obvious established western boundary for the Green Wedge being the public footpath adjacent to Manor Cottage/Village World with its line of accompanying poplar trees which have Tree Preservation Orders. To the east the boundary was correctly positioned at the top of the sloping ground. The land between these two limits should not be covered with hard impervious building and paving materials.

Also of concern is the removal of hedgerows which are covered by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, particularly those alongside Rectory Road and at the rear of Lawn Road which meet the criteria including the necessary number of tree species. The



loss of these important hedgerows needs to be urgently reviewed if the development is to be sympathetic to the existing Staplegrove village environment.

We understand that the purpose of the attenuation ponds is to retain surface water run-off and to delay the delivery of this water to the actual drainage system. They will normally be dry and will be designed with shallow sides to enable them to be available as open space. How will these areas be maintained and what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the necessary arrangements will last over time? Ideally this work should be undertaken by TDBC.

Whilst we would welcome the provision of an outer ring road to north Taunton to cater for and relieve the overwhelming amount of through traffic which currently uses Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane, we still consider the current applications to be excessively large and totally out of keeping with the character of the village. At present it is not necessary to build on what is largely prime 'Best and Most Versatile' agricultural land with its magnificent rural aspect which is enjoyed by many Taunton citizens.

There are few job opportunities in the immediate area and the number in Taunton generally is well down on the anticipated level assumed to be applicable during the period of the development and therefore the proposal is far too early and should await a real need being shown.

Staplegrove Parish Council therefore maintains its original position and considers that this development is unnecessary, unwanted and should not be allowed to go ahead.

*(Further comments dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017)*

We are aware that the SADMP has been approved by the Council and that the area north of Staplegrove has been found to be suitable for housing and that TDBC are keen to allocate sites for housing in accordance with the current, slightly outdated, Core Strategy. However, we consider that the currently suggested number is far too great and should be within the original stated figure of 500-1500. We are also aware that the Government is pushing for more housing but, in the words of the Housing Minister and our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, 'it must be within a framework of the correct infrastructure...which means the best transport links, facilities, green spaces, cycle and walkways'. I am therefore extremely disappointed to read, in a letter sent to the promoters' highway engineers, that Mr J Burton, in a reference to the use of a possible access drop down road arrangement on to Manor Road (actually he means Corkscrew Lane), is 'happy to recommend this as a temporary measure, but I am quite certain that there will be opposition to this from Members of the Public....'

The Government, in support of the need for the correct infrastructure to be in place, have made available some £175million and I wonder why it is that you and TDBC are not requiring the promoters and subsequent developers to access some of this money to ensure that the promised spine road is completed before any house building is undertaken? This has always been the original intention and would help in relieving the only northern outer ring road round Taunton, namely, the country lane that is Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane, from being more completely overwhelmed than it is at present. The money should then be repaid by the developers as they sell the

new housing.

Why is it that TDBC are quite prepared to inflict extensive congestion, danger and pain for five years or so, on the local residents, when advantage could easily be taken of the provision made by the Government to avoid this happening? In any other business one would expect the developers to borrow the necessary finance (in this particular case from their own parent companies!) rather than causing misery on the local area for years, just so that they can make a higher profit.

*KINGSTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL –  
(original comments dated 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016)*

Kingston St Mary Parish Council wishes to object, in the strongest terms, to the above outline planning application submitted by PM Asset Management. We make no apology for repeating many of the points we raised in our objection to the outline application for Staplegrove (West) – number 34/16/0007 – since both halves of this massive development will have a considerable impact on the everyday lives of people living in the Kingston St Mary parish.

It is regrettable that the outline plans for the East and West sections of this site were submitted separately rather than allowing us to look at the proposals for the entire area at the same time. Having now had the opportunity to see the proposals for the eastern side of the site, although we were given an impossibly short time span in which to consult residents and submit our comments, we wish to make the following observations –

1. This development is far larger than we were led to believe initially. The Core Strategy originally proposed between 500 and 1,500 homes being built as part of the North Taunton Extension. The outline plans now envisage a total of *at least* 1,628 dwellings (Staplegrove West 713 and Staplegrove East 915).
2. We understand that further areas bordering Kingston Road, which are left blank at present, are within the control of the developers and are clearly earmarked for building at some future date when high voltage cables are undergrounded. We note a spur off the proposed Spine Road marked as “Safeguarded Link Road” which would serve these areas.
3. There is serious concern that the edge of the site boundary shown in the outline plans is farther north than was shown during the public consultations. Should development eventually extend to this northern boundary it would take building to within literally two or three fields of the built up area of Kingston St Mary destroying the essentially rural character and aspect of the village which is a conservation area.
4. We challenge the need for so many homes, swallowing up swathes of productive agricultural land on the approach to the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, one of Somerset’s scenic gems attracting thousands of visitors - and generating revenue for local businesses - every year.
5. A claim by promoters that the development would be “mostly bungalows”

(Somerset County Gazette May 19<sup>th</sup> 2016) is blatantly not true. Their Design Statement Part 12, paragraph 6.7 states quite clearly: "Residential properties will generally comprise two storeys of up to 10.5m above proposed ground level, increasing locally to 2.5 storeys (11.75m to ridge above proposed ground level) or in limited locations within the heart of the site, along the Spine Road, to 3 storeys (13m to ridge above proposed ground level). Along Corkscrew Lane the heights of residential properties are lower at up to 1.5 storeys. Mixed use and employment uses to the northwest of the Spine Road/Kingston Road roundabout will be up to 3 storeys (maximum 15m to ridge above proposed ground level)."

6. The national and local economic climate have changed dramatically since the TDBC Core Strategy 2012-2028 was drawn up. The projections of population and employment growth in Taunton Deane, on which it was based, are now outdated and urgently need revision.

7. Figures from the Office for National Statistics, up to 2015, show a *downward* projection of the Labour Demand in Taunton Deane compared to the upward trend predicted in the Core Strategy. Yet the housebuilding rate far exceeds both the national and county average.

8. Taunton Deane is the district showing the greatest fall in employment but has the highest housebuilding rate.

9. The immediate impact of the proposed Staplegrove development would be the volume of traffic generated. Working on an average of just one vehicle per household – and that would be a very low average – almost 1,000 extra vehicles will be using Kingston Road (wrongly labelled as Taunton Road on the plans) which for much of its length is barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass.

10. In addition, the proposed primary school, shops, cafes and employment areas within the development would generate extra traffic and during the construction period (likely to be many years) tradesmen's vehicles and heavy plant would be accessing the site.

11. The volume of traffic using Kingston Road has increased hugely in recent years, well beyond the forecast national trend. The road now serves three schools (Taunton International School opened in 2012, Kingston St Mary primary and King's Hall) and is used daily by pupils attending the town's secondary schools. We know that this route is also used by an increasing number of commuters travelling into Taunton from Bridgwater and West Somerset to avoid congestion and delays on more major routes. This number is expected to rise further if and when construction of the new Hinkley Point nuclear station gets under way.

12. Marking an area on a map as "employment land" does not create jobs. Most people living in these houses will work in Taunton or will want to travel across the town to employment in the Hankridge/Henlade area or get to the M5 motorway. The already heavily congested roads of north Taunton will be brought to a standstill at peak periods. These proposals will affect not just local villages – but the *whole* of the Taunton area.

13. Gridlocked roads will lead to higher levels of air pollution, frustration and additional costs for local businesses, missed appointments and slower response times for emergency vehicles. This development should be halted at least until such time as an outer Northern Distributor Road is built.

14. In addition, a development of this size would put an intolerable strain on schools, particularly secondary schools, water/drainage/sewerage systems and GP and hospital services.

15. We repeat our assertion that this development is not necessary, is being built to meet national/local targets rather than any proven local need.

16. We would suggest Taunton Deane Borough Council should make a stand against pressures to build yet more homes in the best interests of the people it represents.

*(Additional comments dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016)*

Kingston St Mary Parish Council wishes to add to its objections to the above plan in the light of new information that the council believes adds weight to its call for an urgent revision of the Core Strategy 2012-2026 before any more homes are built. The Taunton Deane Borough Council's Adopted Core Strategy (Section 3.3) refers to the anticipated annual growth of the local economy up to 2026 and the creation of around 11,900 net additional jobs. However, figures from the Government's Office of National Statistics ([www.nomisweb.co.uk/local\\_government\\_profiles](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/local_government_profiles)) show the labour demand in Taunton Deane remains at around the same level as in 2006.

At present Taunton Deane is heavily dependent on public sector employment (nearly 40% of current jobs). This is an area that is vulnerable to national and local economic cuts. Retail and agriculture, both traditionally big employers have also suffered well-publicised reverses.

House building rates in Taunton Deane, on the other hand, have soared and the number of new buildings completed in each of the last three years is far above that of its neighbouring authorities (according to ONS figures up to the end of 2015). The latest Somerset Intelligence newsletter reports that Taunton Deane saw one of the biggest rates of increase in dwellings in the South West between 2014 and 2015 (up 1.5%), second only to Exeter (figures from Department for Communities and Local Government - as at 31 March 2015). Read together the statistics from official sources lead us to the inevitable conclusion that Taunton is in grave danger of becoming a dormitory town for the conurbations of Bristol and Exeter, and neighbouring Sedgemoor where labour demand is rising at a rapid pace that is expected to increase even further with the development of the new Hinkley Point site.

This, of course, has serious implications for the traffic situation on the already clogged roads of north Taunton. Many residents of the proposed Staplegrove (West and East) developments will need to drive across the town to get to the M5 junctions at Blackbrook or Wellington, or through the narrow main street of Kingston St Mary,

which for most of its length is barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass, has only one short stretch of pavement and is used by parents to get to the local primary school. Those who opt to catch the train will have to negotiate the notoriously troublesome Rowbarton gyratory system unless they are dropped off by a friend or relative which will create two car journeys through North Taunton morning and evening.

With all the key economic factors seemingly going in the wrong direction, we believe it is time to call a halt to further house building until councillors and officials have taken a fresh look at the projected figures and updated the Core Strategy.

*(Additional comments dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017)*

On balance we would prefer a small roundabout - certainly smaller than the one shown on the original outline plan - especially since it is proposed to have another set of traffic lights (with pedestrian crossing??) just 200 metres away at the junction of Kingston Road and Hope Corner Lane.

Regarding the other amendments to the proposed Staplegrove Development, we would restate our previous position. We believe -

1. This development of 1,600 homes is excessively large - four times the size of the present KSM
2. It is based on forecasts in the out of date Core Strategy which have proved inaccurate.
3. It will not be a sustainable development because most people will be forced to use their cars to get to work since there are no jobs in the area.
4. If it is granted outline permission, the spine road must be built, in its entirety, before any houses are constructed.

*KINGSTON ST. MARY AND STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCILS, Joint letter  
Dated 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016.*

We are taking the unusual step of writing directly to you because of the level of anxiety and concern in the communities we represent about the above applications to build a total of 1628 new houses plus a primary school, community centre and business centre, that have been submitted to you for outline approval. We take the view that to allow such a massive development in a rural location, without the necessary supporting infrastructure being in place would be unsound and, some would argue, irresponsible. It would cause immense disruption to the daily lives and well-being of residents and businesses across the whole of the north of Taunton. We believe that, at the very least, a decision on these twin applications should be deferred until the issues raised by many of the expert external consultees, including conservationists, highways, education and health professionals, have been investigated fully and addressed, and the outdated Core Strategy has been reviewed.

This application cannot be considered in isolation, without reference to the wider implications; its impact on the road network across the north of Taunton that is already gridlocked at peak periods, education, water/drainage/sewerage systems and GP and hospital services.

In a recent speech, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid David said: “We need to build more houses, providing they are in the right place and there is appropriate infrastructure and public services to match them.” The proposed North Taunton development does not meet this test – and should be postponed until the necessary roads and services are in place.

The Core Strategy 2011-2028, which determined future housing needs, is out of date and urgently needs revision. Employment in Taunton Deane, according to Office of National Statistics, has remained almost static over the past decade and is now approximately the same as when the Core Strategy was being written. The projected increase in jobs has not happened. In fact, the number employed in Taunton Deane has fallen in the last year. A decline that will not be helped by the current uncertain economic climate. There is little or no employment in the north of Taunton, contrary to the aim of locating homes and workplaces closer together. This means residents in this proposed development will have to cross town in order to reach areas of employment and many will probably have to travel outside the Borough, to the growth centres of Exeter, Bristol and Bridgwater. This would result in the North Taunton development becoming a vast, sprawling dormitory township, with little integration with existing communities. The extra commuters will add to the pressures on an already clogged road network. Hardly a sustainable development!

Our detailed concerns are –

#### Traffic congestion

We consider that the calculation made by the promoters that appears to show that the

Traffic Impact Assessment of their proposals on the Strategic Highway Network is ‘only slight and certainly not severe’ cannot possibly be correct. We and many others have called for the spine road to be constructed before any housebuilding is commenced because of the effects this development would have on the roads in the area. This is particularly so in the case of Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane and at the eastern connection to Kingston Road.

The transport infrastructure requirements of TDBC’s Policy TAU2 calls for the construction of: ‘a new northern link road from the Silk Mills Roundabout on the A358, to Kingston Road, with provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton’ and sets out that the masterplan should provide for the ‘closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road other than for local access’. It would indeed be sensible to continue the spine road eastwards around Wellsprings Leisure Centre to Cheddon Road and then to connect to the existing length at Nerrol’s Drive. This would enable much easier access to the motorway, avoiding the town centre, and would solve many of the highway distribution problems associated with the development, particularly at the St Andrew’s gyratory system. But it would need to be constructed at the same time as the spine road.

#### Education

The additional pupils from the North Taunton development will put extra pressure on existing primary and secondary schools, most of which are already oversubscribed. Since, we understand, the proposed new primary school will not be completed in the first phase of the development, pupils will have to be bussed to other schools in Taunton for four or five years. Adding to the traffic on the road network.

### Health

Existing local GP surgeries and health centres are already under extreme pressure. Additional numbers will only exacerbate the problems and increase the difficulties residents face in getting appointments with their doctor. There will also be increased pressure on Musgrove Park Hospital and a whole range of health services.

### Landscape

Building 1628 houses on mostly prime Best and Most Versatile agricultural land would be criminal and will destroy a magnificent rural aspect on the approach to the Quantock Hills, an area of outstanding natural beauty that is a prime tourist attraction bringing valuable trade to local businesses. We would like to echo the comments made by the Quantock Hills AONB Service about the effect of building on this large area of agricultural land. This land forms part of the vale that offers a clear sense of separation between the urban environment of Taunton and the gateway to the Quantock Hills at Kingston St Mary. Loss of this open land will result in a marked, visible reduction in the gap between urban environment and a nationally protected landscape – with urban fringe influences e.g. highways infrastructure and urban lighting moving ever closer to the boundary of the AONB.

### Increased Flooding

Staplegrove Parish Council has serious worries about the increased likelihood of flooding in various places due to this North Taunton Development proposal. Flooding has occurred fairly regularly in Lawn Road, at Hillhead Cottages in Rectory Road and to the sports field of Staplegrove Sports Club, due to run-off from the fields to the north during pronounced wet weather. Similarly, flooding at the junction between Whitmore Lane and Corkscrew Lane is perhaps a more frequent event, once again due to the run-off from the fields sloping down to the road from both east and west. This has been known to produce treacherous conditions on freezing nights.

It is recognized that precautions are planned to be designed to cater for the increased occurrence of flooding caused by the proposed schemes with the provision of attenuation ponds and Sustainable Drainage System techniques but we are particularly concerned that the promoters have indicated that they wish to restrict the intended width of the extended Green Wedge by constructing estates on both the east and west edges. Not only does this reduce the principal purpose of the wedge of maintaining the identity and open character of the area for the health and wellbeing of the residents, but also increases the difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory method of flood prevention. This restricted width is very strongly opposed by the Parish Council.

The SADMP adopted an obvious established western boundary for the Green Wedge being the public footpath adjacent to Manor Cottage/Village World with its line of accompanying poplar trees which have Tree Preservation Orders. To the east the boundary was correctly positioned at the top of the sloping ground. The land between these two limits should not be covered with hard impervious building and paving materials as is included in the current proposals.

We understand the need for additional housing but this development is in the wrong place and excessively large. It is many times the size of the existing villages of Staplegrove and Kingston St Mary, both conservation areas, which will be swamped by their larger neighbour and lose their distinctive character. We believe it would be unsound and unacceptable for any TDBC Planning Committee to approve the North Taunton Staplegrove Development given the current concerns and circumstances.

*CHEDDON FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL –  
(Original comments received 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016)*

Background Information:

1. Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council are replying in respect of the area of land off Kingston Road within the Parish boundary of Cheddon Fitzpaine which was originally designated Light Industrial Units.
2. This area has been excluded from the ongoing Neighbourhood Plan because the anticipated result of this Planning application will be received before the Verification of the joint NP with West Monkton Parish Council (approx. May 2017).
3. The Parish Council has not been informed of the change of use from Light Industrial Units to Residential Use; and would wish to know of the reasons for this change of thought.
4. The retention of opportunities for Industrial Use would be welcomed. The comments received from analysis of the NP indicate Starter Units to be preferred.

*(Additional comments received 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016)*

Following a public open meeting at Kingston St Mary on 7 June 2016, and the Parish Council meeting of Cheddon Fitzpaine on 9 June 2016, the following comments were raised which I have been asked to forward to your office for inclusion with the above application:

1. It is noted that the report by the TDBC Tree Officer David Galley seeks to protect the TPOs on trees in Kingston Road particularly in the vicinity of the proposed roundabout at Okehills. This area falls within the Parish of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish and Parish Councillors support the Tree Officer's comments.
2. Similarly, the CPRE report regarding retaining hedgerows.

*NORTON FITZWARREN PARISH COUNCIL –  
(Comments of 7th June 2016)*

The Parish Council wish to object to this application on the grounds of highway issues which will seriously affect Norton Fitzwarren.

The Parish Council question the statistics given for the increase in volume of traffic as a result of this development, and would like to stress that the issues raised in our letters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> March still stand. Has the completion of the Great Western Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road been taken into account when calculating these figures? On completion of these roads the volume of traffic will greatly increase.

The parish Council agrees with the comments made regarding the spine road in Staplegrove Parish Council's letter of the 2<sup>ih</sup> May. The spine road should be completed before any development commences. Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane are the designated route for school children from Norton Fitzwarren to Ladymead Academy, it will be highly dangerous for them to use this route if it is to be used for construction traffic for the first 200 units.



The intended western exit of the spine road, as shown on the plans is not a suitable location, the Parish Council feels it would be better to exit at the junction of Silk Mills and the A358. As Staplegrove PC state in their letter five sets of traffic lights in such a short space would cause increased congestion in an already congested road.

We request that the above concerns are taken into account when considering this application. We also request that this Council is notified of the date when this application will be going before the Planning Committee.

#### *PLANNING POLICY OFFICER (TDBC) AND THE ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN -*

The two planning applications needs to be considered together to assess whether or not they conform, in total, to the policies in the Development Plan and the resolutions carried at the meeting of Borough Council's Executive of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

It is noted that both applications reserve all matters except for access. Because of this, planning policy comments will therefore be restricted (1) to this unreserved aspect and (2) to any matters which the developer(s) will need to take into account or comply with when submitting subsequent planning applications for 'reserved matters', or which should feature in legal agreements.

#### Conformity with the Site Allocations and Development Plan (SADMP)

The two planning applications provide in total for 1628 dwellings. Policy TAU2 refers to 'around 1500', but this should not be seen as an upper limit. If land can be used more efficiently and a larger number of dwellings provided, in terms of the overall need to accommodate housing in Taunton, this is advantageous.

Whilst the application for the western part of the site refers to 'up to' 25% affordable housing, that for the eastern part does not. To confirm with the Development Plan (Core Strategy Policy CP4) there has to be an overall provision of affordable housing across the two areas of 25%, which on the basis of the two applications submitted, would equate to around 400 units in total. The applicants did not indicate at the development plan stage that there would be any viability issues preventing the delivery of 25% affordable housing.

The application for the eastern area includes a local centre at the location specified in Policy TAU2. The application does not indicate a quantum of space for this. To comply with the Development Plan, reserved matters applications will therefore need to be brought forward to provide the amount of floorspace, mix of uses and built form (multi-storey buildings with residential or office uses on upper floors) specified in Policy TAU2.

Policy TAU2 specifies that a minimum of 2ha of serviced employment land should be provided within the overall development area. The application for the western part of the site includes 1ha of employment land. No reference is made to an area of employment of land in the planning application for the eastern part of the site, although it is referred to in the covering letter. To comply with Policy TAU2, it must be made clear that 1ha of employment land should be included on the eastern part of the site (adjacent to the local centre).

It is noted that the western application refers to 2500 sq. m of B1 office use. This is not in conformity with Policy TAU2, which refers to B1 (b) and (c), non-office uses only in the employment areas. It is also not in conformity with Policy EC1, which refers to office development as a 'main town centre use'. Freestanding office development should not be allowed to disperse away from the established town centres, particularly Taunton where major mixed-use regeneration schemes are proposed.

The proposal to include a primary school in the eastern part of the site conforms to Policy TAU2, subject to subsequent agreement with the County Council as the Education Authority.

Whilst the size and extent of the proposed Green Wedge is a 'reserved matter', the Borough Council's Executive made clear at its meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015, that 'Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.' The Green Wedge shown in the application is smaller than that shown in the SADMP, but evidence is not provided in the Design and Access Statement to justify this.

The applications provide multi-functional green space in line with Policy TAU2. (*Confirmation needed as to whether it is line with the Council's standards*).

The application for the western area proposes placing the 33kV power lines underground, as required by Policy TAU2.

The application for the western part of the site proposes that development be carried out with access from Manor Road. This appears to be in conflict with Policy TAU2, in that it would result in additional development being accessed via Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road; roads which it is intended to relieve of traffic, other than vehicles requiring access to premises. (*Need to add sentence to reflect current position with the Highway Authority*). Such a proposal also involves development in the area designated as part of the Green Wedge in the SADMP. It should be noted that there are also aspirations to expand the existing sports facilities in this area, which could be more compatible with the Green Wedge designation, and help to maintain separation between the core of Staplegrove village and the proposed new development to the east.

#### Response to Resolutions of the Borough Council's Executive 11th November 2015

At its meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Borough Council's Executive resolved to endorse the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief, subject to a number of qualifications. The relevant resolutions are set out below, with an indication of whether or not the submitted applications are held to comply, or what measures will need to be taken at the reserved matters stage to comply.

Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed spine road accords with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the spine road should be agreed by the Borough Council.

The alignment of the proposed pine road and its junction design appears to allow for a future eastern extension, should this be taken forward by the County Council as

transport authority. Provision will need to continue to be safeguarded as development comes forward in planning applications for reserved matters.

The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists.

Whilst the detailed design of the spine road (i.e. between the junctions at its eastern and western extremities) is a reserved matter, it is considered that the designs which have been submitted in the planning applications do not conform to the advice contained in *Manual for Streets* (Parts 1 and 2) with regard to provision for cyclists. The comments submitted by Sustrans on the applications appear relevant in this regard.

The House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment has recommended in its report, 'Building Better Places' (February 2016) that compliance with *Manual for Streets* should be mandatory.

The applicant appears to be proposing a spine road with an overall width of 17.25m. A road designed to the Sustrans specification would have a slightly greater overall width of 19.0m (including parking bays); with a 6.75m carriageway the overall width would be 19.75m. However, the applicant's road does not provide a cycle facility on each side of the road, as advocated by Sustrans; were this to be done, the overall width would be 18.75m. It thus appears possible to provide a scheme in conformity with the advice in *Manual for Streets* and as per the comments provided by Sustrans, which does not significantly increase the land take required.

The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre. As this is a reserved matter, this will need to be demonstrated at the detailed design stage.

The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area. This is a reserved matter; however the applicant has indicated a willingness to discuss this at a later date.

The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the applicants to agree these.

The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the Council to progress this.

Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The Green Wedge shown is smaller than that shown in the SADMP, and as noted above, evidence has not been provided in the Design and Access Statement to justify this.

Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units

suitable for business start-ups. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the applicants when detailed proposals are submitted for the 2ha of employment land.

The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground. The applicants have stated their intention to do this. It is suggested that this be made a condition on any grant of planning permission.

#### SADMP Policy D2 – Approach Routes to Taunton and Wellington

Policy D2 of the SADMP refers to the need to protect the visual qualities of routes into and out of Taunton and Wellington. Taunton Road is referred to specifically in paragraph 1.8.2 linked to this policy.

The relationship of the urban area of Taunton to its rural surroundings is one of the major features that makes the town an attractive place to live, and great care therefore needs to be taken in the design of any new development.

In view of this, it is not considered acceptable to employ a roundabout at the junction between the spine road and Taunton Road. In urban design terms, recognised good practice is to first to design the overall 'place', with buildings defining spaces, and fit the highway requirements within that. This application does the opposite: it starts from the premise that a roundabout should be provided, leaving the placing of buildings and resultant quality of place as residual matters. Experience suggests that this kind of highway-led approach could have a seriously adverse impact on the visual quality of the environment.

Roundabouts of the type indicated are also unsatisfactory for cyclists and pedestrians. The proposal would therefore be in conflict with SADMP Policy A3, which among other things, aims to secure cycle-friendly road junction design.

The applicants have subsequently suggested a signalised junction be provided at Taunton Road, instead of a roundabout. This appears more acceptable in terms of Policies D2 and A3. Consideration should however be given as to how the size of a signalised junction at Taunton Road could be minimised – for example, through the design of signal phasing to limit the need for multiple turning lanes.

In principle, the signalised junction proposed by the applicants on the A358 would be acceptable in terms of Policy D2, subject to contemporary 'best practice' being followed to minimise the use of guard railings and other vertical features. Similarly with the proposed conversion of the roundabout at the A358/Silkmills Lane to a signalised junction.

#### SADMP Policy A1 – Parking requirements

For information, it should be noted that the Borough Council has not adopted the County Council's parking standards, and that the standards set out in Appendix F of the SADMP should be applied.

#### SADMP Policy A2 – Travel Planning

The form of the development would result in significant areas of housing being beyond convenient walking distance (generally taken as being 400m) from existing bus routes along the A358 and Taunton Road. The developer should be required to provide a bus service to the development, to commence when the distance from

newly constructed dwellings within the sites to existing bus stops off-site exceeds 400m.

#### SADMP Policy A3 – Cycle Network

As already noted, the future design of cycle facilities within the highway should comply with *Manual for Streets* Parts 1 and 2. The use of signalised junctions at either end of the development area appears to add weight to the argument that on the route of the spine road, cycle facilities should be in the form of good-quality on-road provision.

Many of the key cycle connections – for example, to the town centre – are off-site, and improvements will need to be funded from CIL or other sources. It is noted that the applicant does not appear to have undertaken an audit of the walking and cycle route from Staplegrove to Bindon Way.

#### SADMP Policy A5 – Accessibility of Development

As a major new development on an allocated site, the proposed developments essentially comply with Policy A5; the critical issues will be to ensure that an urban frequency bus service is provided at an early stage in the development, and that cycle connections to off-site destinations are upgraded as soon as practicable.

#### SADMP Policy D9 – A co-ordinated approach to development and highway planning

Whilst the detailed design of the development is a reserved matter, it should be noted that Policy D2 expects developers to follow the guidance contained in *Manual for Streets* Parts 1 and 2.

#### *SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP – (Initial comments of 7th June 2016)*

I refer to the above mentioned planning application received on 17th May 2016 and following a site visit on the 19th May 2016 I have the following observations on the highway and transportation aspects of this proposal.

The outline application has all matters reserved except from the principle points of access. Until further information is provided to resolve existing uncertainties outlined below the Highway Authority are not able to fully consider and, or make an informed decision on the application received to date. It should be noted that this response does not provide detailed comments on the following submitted elements of the application:

- Travel Plan;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Proposed Spine Road;
- Access Junction Silk Mills / Staplegrove West
- Signalised Junction Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane;
- Rectory Road Junction;
- Proposed Corkscrew Lane Access Junction;
- Corkscrew Lane Access Road;
- Taunton Road Access Junction

Comments with regard to the above listed submission documents will be provided within due course, as and when the existing uncertainties have been resolved. At

present the response only makes comment with regard the Transport Assessment, dated December 2015, produced by WSP / Parsons Brinckerhoff.

### Overview

The Application site is to form one half of the Staplegrove Urban Extension Area East and Area West. The proposed development splits are as follows:

#### Staplegrove East:

- 915 residential dwellings;
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA in one 2.5 storey building and one 3 storey building);
- A local centre comprising various ancillary users;
- A two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils); and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping /infrastructure

#### Staplegrove West:

- 713 residential dwellings
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA over two storeys; and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping/infrastructure.

### Transport Assessment

Further information is required in order to fully understand the impact of the individual Proposal 'Staplegrove East' and the cumulative impact of 'Staplegrove West'. Sufficient access arrangements and mitigation is considered necessary in order for the proposal to be delivered on Highways Grounds. The outline application has all matters reserved except for the principle points of access. At this stage there is not considered to be enough information for the Highway Authority to be able to make an informed decision on the planning application. Therefore applicant will need to submit further details regarding the following;

- The interim impact the first phase of development will have on the surrounding road network, most importantly Manor Road.
- Four points of access, one from the A358 Staplegrove road, one from Taunton Road and two from Corkscrew Lane are proposed for the Staplegrove Development. The points of access from Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road are considered contrary to policy within the Draft Site Allocations and Development Plan which states '*Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local access*'. The provision of access points, whether temporary or permanent are not considered necessary in Highway Terms. Other access options should be considered. It is suggested that development at both 'East' and 'West' commences in different locations on site, mitigating impact on Manor Road.
- Information regarding how the treatment of Manor Road in line with the Draft Site Allocations document other than for local traffic as well as suitable trigger to ensure the change of use of the Road is delivered will need to be provided as part of the East and West Applications.
- Construction traffic for both the Spine Road and the development should route from Staplegrove and Kingston Road Directly. Manor Road is not considered appropriate to accommodate construction traffic beyond the early need. The point of access on Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane have not been modelled, this would be required in order to identify impacts.
- More details are required on the impact of the single access 'Phase 1 Assessment'. Modelling of the agreed network assessed for the application this should be provided. There is concern the impact of this proposal will have on the

village of Staplegrove and Manor Road, without an adequate assessment the impact is unknown. Link data identifying queue and delay should be provided as well as junction assessments. Suitable tracking is required.

- Section 7 of the Transport Assessment refers to the Non-Motorised User Audit. Improvements required linking the development to the Taunton Academy and the Railway Station. Improvements that are site specific should be provided through a Section 106 agreement and will not be CIL compliant, as in line with the Taunton Deane's CIL Regulation 123 list which states '*Transport – Strategic transport improvements associated with the growth of Taunton and Wellington, excluding site specific matters needed to make development acceptable in planning terms. Site specific matters can include on-site and off-site transport mitigation works and infrastructure improvements, where the need for such measures have been Identified in a Transport Assessment*' there are several areas that are considered to be site specific and improvement should be provided within a Section 106 agreement.
- Improvements to the Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane junction proposed within the 'East' and 'West' TA is considered by the Highway Authority necessary to facilitate the proposed development. Therefore it is not considered to be a scheme that would fall within CIL. The East development will utilise this junction as a point off access, therefore it is considered site specific.
- A proportion of 'through trips' have been reassigned from Manor Road to use the Spine Road. It has not been explained how these numbers were determined. There are very few residual trips to and from Manor Road. Further justification / information is provided.
- The Kingston Road Gyratory is identified to operate close to capacity in the base situation and over the theoretical capacity in 2028 without development traffic. The addition of development traffic, results in substantial congestion and delay. No scheme is identified at this junction, based on development impact the Highway Authority are not certain that the scheme would be CIL compliant and a scheme would be expected to be delivered through a Section 106 Agreement.
- There are a number of assignment turning figures that need revising / clarifying – the Highway Authority will contact WSP to discuss.
- There are inconsistencies between the tables of trip generation and assignment figures which should be clarified.
- The wider network as previously requested by SCC has not been assessed, junctions include: Staplegrove West site access, Staplegrove Road / A3065 Silk Mills Lane (Silk Mills Roundabout), A358/B3227 Crosskeys Roundabout, A358 Staplegrove Road / Manor Road Traffic Signals, A3065 Silk Mills Lane / Great Western Way / Bindon Road Traffic Signals. A358 Staplegrove Road, Greenway Road, A3207 Staplegrove Road mini roundabout. Staplegrove Road / Bindon Road Priority Junction. Personal Injury Accident data should also be collected across the same study area.
- Contrary to para 6.6.4 particularly regarding Corkscrew Lane / Manor Road there is considered to be both patterns and clusters on Personal Injury Accidents and raises concern that further development traffic using this route will adversely impact on safety.

This information is essential to understand the impact the proposed development could generate, in order for the Highway Authority to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the network is managed and maintained. If this information is not forthcoming then the Highway Authority may need to raise objection to this proposal on the grounds of a lack of information.

Notwithstanding the above the Highway Authority will continue to consider the technical detail of schemes which have been included and assess their acceptability. Depending on what additional information is received (and when) and the outcome following further consideration of the submitted schemes, the Highway Authority reserve the right to request further information when all elements of the application have been reviewed. However, the additional information is necessary to inform consideration of the application.

*(Further comments of 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016)*

I refer to the above mentioned planning application received on 17 May 2016 and following several site visits I have the following observations on the highway and transportation aspects of this proposal.

### Summary

There are a number of elements set out within this response which required addressing prior to the Highway Authority making a recommendation to the Highway Authority. Without referencing the Transport Assessment which is currently being addressed by the applicants transport consultants, there a number of additional matters that need to clarified and, or addressed. Without further information the Highway Authority would be minded to recommend a refusal based in insufficient information being provided in order to make an informed decision.

The outline application has all matters reserved except for the principle points of access. The following elements of the application have been reviewed in detail by the Highway Authority and comments are included within this response;

- Travel Plan;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Access Junction 'East';
- Access Junction' West';
- Corkscrew Lane – Village world Access;
- Corkscrew Lane Access Junction;
- Signalised Junction Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane
- Whitmore Lane Junction
- Rectory Road Junction
- Spine Road;

### Overview

The Application site forms one half of the Staplegrove Urban Extension. Two applications are submitted by two applicants PM Asset Management on behalf of area 'East' and Ptarmigan group on behalf of area 'West'. The proposed developments consist of:

#### *Staplegrove West:*

- 713 residential dwellings
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA over two storeys; and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping/infrastructure

#### *Staplegrove East:*

- 915 residential dwellings;
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA in one 2.5 storey building and one 3 storey building;



- A local centre comprising various ancillary users;
- A two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils); and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping /infrastructure

### Phasing

Both Staplegrove East and West are proposed to come forward in phases:

#### Phase 1

Consists of 326 dwellings, primary school & 0.5 hectares of employment, access will be from the proposed roundabout on Kingston Road only. All phase 1 development is west of Kingston Road.

#### Phase 2

No other access to Staplegrove East is proposed until the spine road is complete. A further 419 dwellings are to be developed, will gaining access from the Spine road In addition to the spine road junction, access is proposed from Corkscrew Lane (opposite Clifford) for 139 dwellings to avoid building an access road from the spine road through the existing tree line north of this plot. Also, 55 dwellings are proposed to be accessed from Corkscrew Lane using the same access junction as used by Staplegrove West for their phase 1 development.

It is considered that phasing of the East and West Developments will overlap. With regard to the delivery of infrastructure, particularly referencing the Spine Road detailed information will need to be provided at the reserved matters stage to ensure the timely delivery of major infrastructure. Appropriate triggers will need to be detailed within the appropriate legal agreement in line with the outline application.

### Transport Assessment

The Transport Assessments for both East and West have been commented on separately prior to this response being produced of which have been sent to the Planning Authority and subsequently the applicants Transport Consultants. Further work is being undertaken which will form Addendum to the original Transport Assessment, in order to fully understand the impact of the development impact with regard to Highway safety, capacity and the benefits and impacts with regard to the existing area of Staplegrove Village and the wider network. Off-site Highway Works that have been detailed or requested with regard to the TA are to be covered in further detail when the Addendum TA is submitted for review.

### Travel Plan

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need clarifying / addressing. It should be noted at this stage that TP will be subject to a Section 106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required. Due to the size of the development it is considered appropriate for a Framework TP to be produced to ensure the details of the whole development both 'East' and 'West' are included within the overarching plan. It may also be beneficial to have SCC act as the Travel Plan co-ordinator.

Further detail is required with regard to the following points, additional points are raised within the full audit and comments will be issued separately to the applicants Transport Consultants to address points raised within the Audit.

- Bus Services;
- Site Audit; details relating to: 'Accessibility by Non-car modes'; School delivery and

connectivity, Footways, and Offsite connectivity;

- Measures;
- Travel Plan Co-ordinator and the proposed management levy;
- Vehicle and Cycle Parking, and
- Monitoring

The success of the delivery of the TP's is likely to hang on one succinct TP and Co-ordinator taking lead.

### Flood Risk Assessment

The Water and Drainage report has been produced. Comments are made as follows on the contents and conclusions of this report as they pertain to the existing and prospective public highway network.

- It is noted that the drainage strategy incorporates the use of attenuation ponds. Whilst it is noted that the current layout is indicative, careful consideration regarding their location / proximity to the adjacent highway will need to be given. Additionally, whilst SCC would not seek to adopt the attenuation basins, merely seek consent to discharge surface water runoff into these features, SCC has a vested interest in their performance and as such a strict maintenance regime will need to be adhered to in order to safeguard the efficiency of the system. Confirmation regarding the future maintenance responsibilities will be required.

- According to the drainage strategy the surface water runoff will discharge from the attenuation basins to the local watercourses. The developer will require consent from Somerset County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority) to construct any outfall or carry out works at this point. Consent forms can be obtained from the Somerset County Council website as per the following link:

[http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding/work-on-anordinary-watercourse/Local watercourse](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding/work-on-anordinary-watercourse/Local%20watercourse)

- It must be assumed that any existing highway drainage systems in the locality are operating at design capacity and are therefore not suitable to serve to collect any increase in highway catchment. Any drainage design will need to be compatible with any existing infrastructure. Detailed drawings indicating the existing infrastructure can be supplied to the Designer on request.

- Any existing drainage infrastructure serving the highway network impacted on by the highway proposals will need to be incorporated within the revised proposals. This is particularly relevant for the alteration works on Kingston Road and Corkscrew Lane.

### Access Junction East

The Staplegrove West application includes the provision of a roundabout to be located on Taunton Road to the East of the proposed development site. The roundabout is to be provided by the Staplegrove East applicant who's transport consultant have produced the proposed roundabout scheme. The roundabout is proposed to be delivered in line with the completion of the Spine Road when the 250th dwelling is delivered.

With regard to the design and layout the following drawing has been reviewed '*Taunton Road Access Roundabout*' 0781-GA-022. Detailed information is required for all road schemes mentioned within this response is required. The same comments apply to all schemes proposed:

- Information with regard to visibility and stopping distances for cyclist to ensure a safe scheme for all road users is implemented.
- The location of the proposed controlled crossing should be relocated as in line with LTN 1/95 AND 2/95.
- Dimensions of the roundabout are not provided, radii, circulatory carriageway, entry widths, kerb radii, footway widths, cycleway width will need to be detailed to ensure suitability of the scheme.
- Predicated AADT figures for the spine road are required to ensure suitability of the scheme.
- No swept path analysis has been provided at this time, swept path drawings should be provided based on the largest FTA Design Vehicle expected to use the junction at a scale of 1:200. Swept paths should also be provided to demonstrate the requirement for the overrun area. Overrun areas that are not properly constructed can occur ongoing maintenance issues and could result in higher entry and exit speed is not constructed in accordance the Traffic Advisory Leaflet.
- No drainage or lighting details have been provided, full details included will be required at the detailed design stage. The Transport assessment does not detail why a roundabout is located in this location, given the proposal of signals at Corkscrew Lane and other junctions along the route, detailed scheme justification is required. It is noted that Taunton Deane Borough Council have also requested this information to ensure a suitable junction type is proposed with the Highway Authority's interest related to safety and capacity.

#### Access Junction West

The access junction for the West to be provided by the area 'West' and will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrove Road to the East of Silk Mills and connecting to the proposed Spine Road. Detailed information with regard to the junction is provided within the response to the West Application 34/16/0007.

#### Corkscrew Lane - Village world access

It is proposed that the Eastern development will provide 55 dwellings gaining access from the Village World 'Area West's' Temporary Access Junction. The proposal of an access point on Corkscrew Lane within out sufficient information raises highway safety and capacity concerns. Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road are considered rural in nature. One of the purposes of the construction of the Spine Road is to relieve traffic from Manor Road; however the proposed treatment of Manor Road has not been detailed at this stage. Policy TAU2 of the Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, states: *'Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local accesses.* With regard to local traffic it is not considered that the policy was referring to new development traffic being deemed as local traffic, justification text states: *'A key issue is the current route through the Village of Staplegrove, which is entirely unsuitable to accommodate additional traffic. For this reason, a new distributor road is proposed running from the existing roundabout on the A358 to Kingston Road. This would enable traffic to be removed from the centre of Staplegrove, other than vehicles requiring access'*. If the access were proven essential for the delivery of the development to be gained from Manor Road or Corkscrew Lane the Highway Authority would require that this was provided after the

opening of the Spine Road and at a point when through traffic at Manor Road was managed to ensure the delivery of what the proposal set out to achieve.

Further information is required as to why this proposal has been put forward in this location including what other options were considered. This information should be provided to the Audit Team with the next submission.

*Priority Narrowing* It is noted from the drawing provided that there is to be a priority narrowing on the second estate road although it is unclear why such a feature is to be provided particularly as priority is being given to traffic entering the estate and not leaving the estate. The minimum width of 3.7m is likely to be acceptable if this feature is retained.

#### Corkscrew Lane Access Junction

The proposal put forward is for a simple priority junction arrangement on to Corkscrew Lane, providing access for around 139 residential dwellings.

This level of development is likely to produce in the region of between 834 and 1112 vehicle movements per day in and out of the development. AADT figures for Corkscrew Lane in 2013 were 5543 vehicles and 85th percentile vehicle speeds were recorded as 29.5mph. Based on the above information a ghost island right turn arrangement would be suitable in accordance with TD 42/95 Geometric Design of Major/Minor Priority.

Based on the above information the simple T junction is likely to be considered inappropriate leading to queuing on Corkscrew Lane and increasing the potential for shunts type accidents and side impact collisions. The problem is further compounded as the proposed site access has been located opposite the existing road known as Clifford Avenue. This proposal creates a cross roads arrangement that will also increase the potential for side impact collisions. It is also likely the northbound traffic will avoid the proposed signalised junction at the junction of Corkscrew Lane and Kingston Road in favour of Clifford Avenue also increasing the likelihood of side impact collisions at the proposed new access.

Consideration should be given to shifting the proposed access further east by 40m and the provision of a ghost island right turn arrangement to serve the development. Drawing 0781-GA-030 Rev A shows centre lines along Corkscrew Lane. It should be noted that the carriageway width along this section appears to be less than 5m in width. As such centre line road markings should not be provided. These road markings should be removed. A footway in this location is proposed at 1.8m wide. This should be widened to the recommended 2m width in the DfT's Inclusive Mobility.

Detailed information is required with regard to drainage, cross fall and longitudinal Sections, gradients, highway lighting, swept paths and kerb details should be provided to ensure deliverability.

As detailed above provision of access points from Corkscrew Lane are considered contrary to policy. There are capacity concerns with regard to Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane. Provision of additional access points in this location require sufficient justification and capacity testing with regard to access junctions and link capacities taking in to account the width of the road, particularly in the proposed locations for additional access points.

### Signalised Junction Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane

It is proposed as part of the application that traffic signals will be installed at the Junction of Kingston Road and Corkscrew Lane. There are currently pedestrian crossing facilities on the southern Kingston Road arm that link in with the existing cycle way along Corkscrew Lane. It is not clear if the link between these be upgraded as part of the scheme works?

No provision has been made for a vehicle maintenance bay. This should be located adjacent to the controller, and be easily accessible from the carriageway. The maintenance bay should consist of a hard-standing area capable of containing at least a long-wheeled base maintenance van. Consideration also needs to be given to visibility splays when incorporating this feature into the design.

The current proposal indicates the existing 'Toucan' crossing point remains at a similar location. However, this has the effect of extending the junction limits further out than may be necessary. Consideration should be given to reviewing the route of the East/West cycle movement and whether the proposed junction can be made more 'compact'. It would make sense to link proposed pedestrian and cycle links from the development to the existing cycle and pedestrian infra-structure already in place.

### Whitmore Lane Junction

*Whitmore Lane North:* The proposal put forward is to sever Whitmore Lane with the construction of a new Spine Road that runs from east to west. It is proposed that the northern leg of Whitmore Lane will tie in to the new spine road in the form of a simple T junction arrangement with 10m junction radii. The following drawing has been provided for consideration: ITL10047-SK-23.

*Whitmore Lane South:* It is proposed that the southern leg of Whitmore Lane will terminate with a turning head linked to a cycle route network that allows cyclists to continue their journey south on carriageway along Whitmore Lane. The principle of terminating the road is likely to be acceptable to the Highway Authority. It is recommended however that the proposed turning head is that of a hammer head arrangement as described in the diagram below and in the 'Red Book' Estate Roads in Somerset.

### Swept Path Analysis

A swept path drawing has been provided for Whitmore Lane. However the drawing does not print correctly at A3 and the scale is too small to fully determine the proposal. It would also appear that the vehicle crosses the centre line of the major road when turning left out of Whitmore Lane. It also crosses the centre line of Whitmore Lane when turning left in from the proposed spine road. Suitable visibility splays detail x and y distances for pedestrians, cyclist and vehicles have not been provided.

It is identified that a footway/cycleway is proposed from the phase 1 Staplegrove East development to Corkscrew Lane to provide pedestrian/cycle access to the development before further development and associated infrastructure is built out.

### Rectory Road Junction

*Rectory Road North:* The proposal put forward is to sever Rectory Road with the construction of a new spine road that runs from east to west. It is proposed that the northern leg of Rectory Road will tie in to the new spine road in the form of a simple

T junction arrangement with 10m junction radii. The following drawing has been provided for consideration: ITL10047-SK-22.

*Rectory Road South:* The proposal put forward is to sever Rectory Road with the construction of a new spine road that runs from east to west. It is proposed that the southern leg of Rectory Road will terminate with a turning head linked to a cycle route network that allows cyclists to continue their journey south on carriageway along Rectory Road.

The principle of terminating the road is likely to be acceptable to the Highway Authority. It is recommended however that the proposed turning head is that of a hammer head arrangement as described in the diagram below and in the 'Red Book' Estate Roads in Somerset. The proposal put forward is to sever Rectory Road with the construction of a new spine road that runs from east to west. It is proposed that the southern leg of Rectory Road will terminate with a turning head linked to a cycle route network that allows cyclists to continue their journey south on carriageway along Rectory Road.

#### Swept Path Analysis:

A swept path drawing has been provided for Rectory Road. The drawing does not print correctly at A3 and the scale is too small to fully determine the proposal. It would also appear that the vehicle crosses the centre line of the major road when turning left out of the access road. It also crosses the centre line of the minor road when turning left in to the development. Suitable visibility splays detail x and y distances for pedestrians, cyclist and vehicles have not been provided.

#### Spine Road

The construction of a new Spine Road is proposed to serve the proposed Staplegrove East and West developments. The majority of the Staplegrove East's residential development will gain access from the Spine Road. It is proposed that the Staplegrove West development will gain access via the Spine Road after the development of the 250th dwelling at Satplegrove West or 5 years whichever comes first. Further assessment and justification is required with regard to the proposed temporary access junction.

There are a number of discrepancies between the two proposals for the design and detail of the Spine Road which has been provided to date, there are a number of differences on the drawings from the west application which will need clarification. Particularly with regard to road hierarchy, bus stop, footways and cycleways. The proposed footway fronting the school should be at least 3m to cater for the additional pedestrian movement in and around this area. It is suggested that Toucan crossings should be provided in this location. The Western Spine details casual parking spaces on the side of the cycleway and some limited direct access to plots on the other. In terms of this eastern section of the spine road the route hierarchy says no direct the Spine Road need to be designed and delivered as one coherent, seamless piece of infrastructure.

Whitmore Lane (north) is to be 2.85m wide which is assumed to be the current width of the lane at this location. This differs to the i-Transport drawing ITL10047 that indicates that the road will be widened at the junction (although no dimension is given). If left at the current width there is concern that conflict will occur between vehicles entering and exiting the narrow junction from the main Spine Road. Whitmore Lane (north) should be widened out to a minimum of 5.5m for a minimum distance of 15m to ensure that there are no conflicts within the junction between

turning vehicles.

*Junction Spacing:* It is noted from the drawings provided that the two junctions closest to the proposed roundabout on Kingston Road appear to be too close together measuring less than the minimum 40m required in the Somerset Estate Roads Guide. A minimum 40m stagger distance should be provided between the centre lines of the two access roads and resubmit the drawings for consideration.

The spine road should be delivered in order to accommodate development traffic, diverted traffic from Staplegrove village; it is considered that an element of new traffic will use the route as it will be easier to negotiate than the existing village route, sufficient modelling should be provided to confirm this is achievable. When sufficient information has been received it is likely that the principal of the Spine Road, and detail will need to set out within an appropriate Section 106 agreement.

### Drainage

It appears that alterations to an existing ordinary watercourse are proposed as part of the construction of the shared footway/cycleway on the northern side of Corkscrew Lane east of the new temporary access. Consent will be required from Somerset County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority) to alter this watercourse. Consent forms can be obtained from the Somerset County Council website as per the following link:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding/work-on-an-ordinary-watercourse/>

Additional drainage provision will be required along Corkscrew Lane in front of the new kerb line to intercept the surface water runoff that previously infiltrated into the adjacent verge/ditch. The Designer will need prove that the proposals (resulting in increased surface water runoff) result in nil detriment to the system downstream of the works. No surface water runoff from the private temporary access will be permitted to discharge on to the public highway.

With this in mind consideration should be given for designing the levels to fall from the adjacent highway. The detailed design proposals will need to consider the drainage implications of the construction of the shared footway/cycleway on the existing land drainage arrangements, particularly in the north east extent of the footway/cycleway works.

### Conclusion

There are a number of elements detailed above that require clarification at this stage. This information is essential to understand the impact the proposed development could generate, in order for the Highway Authority to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the network is managed and maintained. If this information is not forthcoming then the Highway Authority may need to raise objection to this proposal on the grounds of a lack of information.

It should be noted that due to the size and nature of the proposed development the Highway Authority reserve the right to request further information when all elements of the application have been reviewed.

*(Further comments of 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016)*

The planning application was originally received 17th May 2016 to which you already have the Highway Authority comments. As a result of previous responses, a Transport Assessment Addendum report was received as part of the revised submission on 16th September 2016. Please read this response alongside those previously provided as this does not supersede those comments, but rather adds to them.

### **Summary**

As this is an outline application with all matters reserved except access there are a number of points with regard to detail that will require addressing at the reserved matters stage subject to planning consent being granted.

### **Conclusion**

Having reviewed the technical work provided within the Transport Assessment Addendum alongside the full submission it is the view of the Highway Authority that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to the following highway mitigation being secured through s106. If any of these measures are not able to be secured, the impact on the Highway Network is likely to be severe in terms of NPPF and should be recommended for refusal.

#### Development Specific:

- Site Access Staplegrove West Signalised Junction;
- Site Access Staplegrove East (junction type tbc),
- Development Spine Road Linking Staplegrove Road with Taunton Road (Kingston St Mary);
- Pedestrian/cycle access off Corkscrew Lane (opposite Clifford Avenue);
- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular short cuts.

#### Offsite mitigation necessary to accommodate proposed development

- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement)
- Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction Signalisation;
- Kingston Road Gyratory (the complex junction of Kingston Road, Cheddon Road, Greenway Road, Station Road, Priorswood Road and Station Approach)
- Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signals (no physical mitigation is proposed but spine road delivery and linking of the site access to this junction by SCOOT or similar is essential).

#### Travel Plan

Travel plan measures to include but no limited to:

- Bus services / stops and if required improvements;
- Parking, for bikes, motorcycles and vehicles; and
- Travel plan packs and incentives.



### Other

Other locations that will be affected by the development proposals, but that we cannot reasonably require mitigation under s106 are,

- Bindon Rod / Staplegrove Road priority Junction,
- Staplegrove Road / Greenway Road Mini roundabout.

### **Access Junction East**

This application (East) includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a Junction East of the development to Taunton Road is essential for this proposal.

There are currently discussions underway regarding the form of junction that will be required, and these are yet to be settled by Taunton Deane.

Proposals for both a roundabout and signalised junction have been submitted. The modelling and scheme drawing received as part of the Addendum do not replicate each other, a number of amendments will be required to both the modelling and the scheme design in order to accommodate all vehicle movements, stage and phases, as well as non-motorised users. Based on the information received to date the signalised junction in its current form is not considered to be deliverable, in order to meet both safety and capacity requirements.

The Highway Authority are clear that an access scheme can be delivered in this location, however at present for the signalised junction to work, it is considered that greater land take would be required and some changes to the design would be necessary through technical approval, which may influence Taunton Deane considering which access junction they prefer.

Whichever form of junction is to be delivered, it will be secured by s106 agreement, and subject to further technical approval to ensure that the design is deliverable and safe for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, and that capacity is adequately catered for.

### **Access Junction West**

As detailed above, this application includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a Junction west of the development to Staplegrove Road is essential for this proposal.

The West access junction will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrove Road connecting to the proposed Spine Road. A second signal controlled junction is proposed in place of the existing Silk Mills Roundabout. This will result in a right/left stagger arrangement which would be acceptable to the Highway Authority, although the linkage and operation of Cross Keys will need to be considered.

As the access junction proposal links the Silk Mills Junction (with SCOOT or similar) is considered necessary a to combine an improvement at Cross Keys to ensure that network running remains, without such an improvement in this location it is likely that the current delay and congestion will increase due to platooning of traffic from the proposed signalised junctions.

## **Spine Road**

The Spine Road is considered essential for both East and West developments and will be included within both s106 agreements to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety; by either applicant this will be set by appropriate triggers. Currently the Spine Road is proposed to be delivered by the 250<sup>th</sup> dwelling with regard to Staplegrove West and 326 dwellings, 0.5 ha of employment and a primary school at Staplegrove East, or within five years of the commencement of development (whichever comes first). At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) will be closed to vehicular traffic, as will the temporary access at Manor Road.

Comments have previously been made with regard to the Spine Road, although further detailed design work will be addressed at the reserved matters stage. Consistency of the scheme, (as part is designed by the East applicant and part is designed by the West applicant) is considered essential to ensure a safe and sufficient piece of infrastructure is provided for all users (vehicles, and non-motorised alike).

## **Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signalised Junction**

The Manor Road / Staplegrove Road junction requires the delivery of the Spine Road (resulting in subsequent reduction in traffic at this junction) in order to operate within capacity in the future year with development. The provision of SCOOT, or similar is also considered essential to manage the operation and movement along the network, linking with the other proposed Junctions, (West access and Silk Mills).

## **Corkscrew Lane / Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane Staggered Junction**

It is noted within the TA's and Addendum TA's the existing Junction requires a mitigation scheme in order to improve safety and visibility with the addition of the development. A further feasibility audit has been undertaken, and the designer's responses considered, there are a number of elements that will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage with regard to the signalised proposal at this location, subject to consent in order to ensure the proposal is appropriate and deliverable in terms of both safety and capacity.

You should be aware that there is likely to be an impact on the green space and trees at this location, in order to provide a safe and appropriate junction.

## **Kingston Road Gyrotory**

The Kingston Road Gyrotory is modelled to operate above its piratical reserve capacity in the AM peak period in all forecast scenarios and is above capacity in the PM by 2028. It is clear that the proposed developments, Staplegrove East and West impact on this junction. The modelled scheme which provides a small benefit, however an improvement on the 'Do Nothing Scenario' will be required to be fully funded and delivered by the developers of the East and West and proposals and will need to be secured within Section 106 agreements for both applicants.

## **Pedestrian and Cycle access / improvements:**

### Pedestrian / Cycle Access off Corkscrew Lane

The construction of a new pedestrian/cycle access off Corkscrew Lane is proposed by the applicants, the detailed design of the scheme will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage, there are some elements with regard to safety that are considered essential to be revised in order to deliver a safe scheme in this location.

### Offsite Pedestrian and Cycle Improvements

A safe route from the proposed development sites to the Taunton Academy is considered essential for the proposed development, detailed of this route will need to be provided as part of a reserved matters application and will be included within the s106.

Improvements to the walking and cycling facilities at Gypsy Lane are also considered necessary in order to improve and encourage sustainable travel in line with Travel Plan proposals from the site.

### **Travel Plan**

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need addressing. It should be noted that the TP will be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required. It is considered beneficial to have one Travel Plan co-ordinator for both sites. SCC has offered to act as TPC for both Staplegrove developments. In principle subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove East Travel Plan is would be approved subject to a number of detailed amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106.

If the application is approved the following conditions are recommended:

- In relation to the Spine Road any access shall ensure that there shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 300 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 43 metres either side of the access. Such visibility shall be fully provided before any junction(s) with the Spine Road is brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.
- The proposed estate roads, footways, footpaths, tactile paving, cycleways, bus stops/bus laybys, verges, junctions, street lighting, sewers, drains, retaining walls, service routes, surface water outfall, vehicle overhang margins, embankments, visibility splays, accesses, carriageway gradients, drive gradients, car, motorcycle and cycle parking, and street furniture shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing before their construction begins. For this purpose, plans and sections, indicating as appropriate, the design, layout, levels, gradients, materials and method of construction shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.
- The proposed roads, including footpaths and turning spaces where applicable, shall be constructed in such a manner as to ensure that each dwelling before it is occupied shall be served by a properly consolidated and surfaced footpath and carriageway to at least base course level between the dwelling and existing highway.
- No development shall commence unless a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plan. The plan shall include:
  - Construction vehicle movements;
  - Construction operation hours;
  - Construction vehicular routes to and from site;

- Construction delivery hours;
- Expected number of construction vehicles per day;
- Car parking for contractors;
- Specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the
- Environmental Code of Construction Practice;
- A scheme to encourage the use of Public Transport amongst contractors; and
- Measures to avoid traffic congestion impacting upon the Strategic Road Network.

• The applicant shall ensure that all vehicles leaving the site are in such condition as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. In particular (but without prejudice to the foregoing), efficient means shall be installed, maintained and employed for cleaning the wheels of all lorries leaving the site, details of which shall have been agreed in advance in writing by the Local Planning Authority and fully implemented prior to commencement of development and thereafter maintained until the use of the site discontinues.

#### **Addendum Review October 2016**

The Cross Keys roundabout has been assessed in ARCADY as well as LinSig as requested but has not been calibrated against the base year queuing and delay so the modelling is not considered realistic. Therefore the view of the Highway Authority is as it was within the formal response dated November 2016 remains.

#### **Technical Audit comments -Staplegrave East Signalised access junction (included in both East and West amended plans)**

The following points have arisen from Audit and should be addressed:

Kingston Road is particularly narrow immediately north of the junction with Corkscrew Lane measuring less than 5.5m and there are no footways. There are concerns that the increase in traffic going to and from the new development will create problems on the existing network and may increase the potential for head to head collisions and side impact collisions within the vicinity of the property known as Oakhills.

It is recommended that the section of carriageway between Corkscrew Lane and the proposed new junction is widened to 6.5m with a 3.5m wide footway/cycleway on one side (the eastern side?). The footway/cycle way would provide a link to the parcel of land to the east. A Toucan Crossing could be provided on the southern arm to cross users over and in to the main development to the west.

The minimum width between kerbs on the eastern arm entry lane should be 3.5m to minimise the potential for kerb strikes and damage to infrastructure. Please confirm that is the case.

#### **Signals comments to be addressed Drawing No. 0781-GA-045 Revision D**

It is noted that the signal heads on the approach from the north are shown as full green aspects. As the design indicates separate movements, the appropriate arrows will need to be shown.

It is noted that phase F is shown running in stage 3, which is in conflict with traffic phase E. As phase F is already catered for in stage 2 this adequately addresses

any pedestrian/cyclist demand. Amend detail as necessary, relating to stage 3.

There are some concerns that driver(s) who legitimately traverse the stop line when travelling north and making a right turn, may become 'trapped' in the centre of the junction by opposing flows when stage 1 terminates and stage 2 commences, when there are no gaps in the flows. Consideration should be given to overcome the potential scenario.

On the western approach arm a carriageway narrowing/footway and cycleway widening appears to be still shown in place. It is questioned whether this is an outstanding feature left over from the previously planned remote pedestrian crossing proposal? Clarify detail as appropriate.

### Comment

On the eastern approach arm, southern side, the tactile paving layout is incorrect. The stem of the 'L' should guide a visually impaired person to the push button demand unit. Amend detail, as necessary.

### **Traffic Regulation Orders**

Traffic Regulation Orders will be required for the flowing proposals, although the TRO process is separate to the planning process, whilst these scheme are set out below any scheme within the application (s) that involves closure, speed limit change, movement restriction, stopping restriction ... etc. will also need approval of a TRO :

- It is noted from the drawings provided that Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane southbound will be stopped up, as well as the temporary access road, preventing unwanted vehicular shortcuts.
- Clarification will be required regarding the implementation of any new speed limits. (30mph and 40mph limits).

All of these can be dealt with as part of the S106 and Tech approval process.

### **Staplegrave East**

As well as the general information detailed above,

- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and
- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrave to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement)
- Several amendments and commitments need updating need to be committed to in the TP an amended plan has not been received
- A technology package (MOVA/SCOOT) for junctions will also be secured by 106

In order to secure the proposed requirements within a S106, associated details and plans will need to be provided. As per the November response further technical information is likely to be required with regard to the Hope Corner Lane junction.

Please note these items are not exclusive and the previous comments still stand.

*(Further comments of 11th September 2017)*

As you are aware the Highway Authority Provided Comments regarding Staplegrave East, dated 03/11/2016 **your reference : 34/16/0007, Highway Authority Reference TD/PA/4/34 #776611**. The Highway Authority also provided comments in regard to the Staplegrave West Application dated 03/11/2016 **your reference : 34/16/0014, Highway Authority Reference TD/PA/4/34 #776606**.

Whilst both responses set out matters detailed to each individual application, they also set out the Highway Authority's requirement of, both off and onsite Highway works that were **(and still are considered necessary)** for each development individually and collectively. As you are aware the Highway Authority recommended approval of the application subject to a number of mitigation measures to be secured by S106. **To clarify, this position remains.**

In response to these formal comments, detailed above, both applicants Transport consultants submitted Addendum Transport Assessments in December 2016.

The purpose of this response is to update you, 'the Planning Authority', with regard to any changes that may have made Since November, following further information submitted in December 2016. It should be noted that all mitigation required in the formal responses **has not changed**.

### **Staplegrave West**

**Outline Planning Permission (With all matters reserved except for access) for a residential-led, mixed use urban extension to include up to 713 dwellings, 1ha of employment land comprising use classes B1(a) (up to a maximum of 2500sqm), B1(b), B1(c), B2, B8 together with green infrastructure, landscaping, play areas, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and associated works. An internal spine road is proposed to connect the A358 Staplegrave Road and Taunton Road at Land at Staplegrave (West), Taunton.**

**PLANNING APPLICATION 34/16/0007**

Matters that are now clarified are detailed below:

- Site Access Staplegrave East - will be in the form of a Signalised Junction.
- Possible temporary access (restricted movement) arrangement at Manor Road – **the temporary access is only required in relation to the Staplegrave West (Subject to Housing Infrastructure Fund not being successful)** longer term pedestrian and cycling access only is relevant to both applications.
- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy will be provided to ensure both developments can achieve a safe route to school.
- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrave to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton, to be provided.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement, or similar is essential)

- Commitment to provide a scheme for the Long term management of Manor Road (in relation to Spine Road completion) has been provided, details to be provided at reserved matters.
- A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need addressing. It should be noted that the TP will be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required. In principal subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove West Travel Plan is considered to be close to approval subject to final amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106.

## **Conclusion**

Having reviewed the technical work provided within the Transport Assessment Addendum alongside the full submission it is the view of the Highway Authority that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to the following highway mitigation being secured through s106.

## **Staplegrove East**

**Outline Planning Permission (With all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 915 residential units, a primary school, 1 ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect A358 Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road on land at Staplegrove (East), Taunton.**

**PLANNING APPLICATION 34/16/0014**

Below outlines the current position regarding Staplegrove East, Matters that are now clarified are detailed:

- Site Access Staplegrove East - will be in the form of a Signalised Junction.
- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy will be provided to ensure both developments can achieve a safe route to school.
- Commitment to provide a scheme for the Long term management of Manor Road (in relation to Spine Road completion) has been provided, details to be provided at reserved matters.
- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton, to be provided.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement, or similar is essential) .
- A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need addressing .It should be noted that the TP will be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required In principal subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove East Travel Plan is would be approved subject to a number of **detailed** amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106.

## Conclusion

Having reviewed the technical work provided within the Transport Assessment Addendum alongside the full submission it is the view of the Highway Authority that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to the following highway mitigation being secured through s106.

## Current position combined East and West:

Below outlines the current position regarding Staplegrove **West and East**– all other points raised with the previous response remain.

- SCC's letter dated 3 November 2016 confirmed 'no objection' subject to a range of mitigation measures: **This position remains**
- All mitigation measures are agreed with the exception of modifications to the Cross Keys junction; **As per formal response**
- SCC's position is that signalisation of Cross Keys junction is required to mitigate the impact of development. Without signalisation of Cross Keys junction, SCC object to the development on highways grounds; **A suitable scheme at Cross keys is considered to be required.**
- i-Transport have submitted an assessment of the signalisation of Cross Keys roundabout which in its current form demonstrates it would offer no benefit to capacity (Technical Note ITL10047023 TN Cross Key Roundabout submitted 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017). **A suitable scheme at Cross keys is considered to be required. The information provided by the applicant to date, uses data which is not calibrated and is not considered to represent the existing situation that occurs at the Junction particularly in the AM peak, subsequently, future year modelling is not considered sufficient to agree a scheme would not be required.**
- Recent correspondence has discussed partial signalisation/introduction of pedestrian crossings, although no conclusion has been reached. **A suitable scheme at Cross keys is considered to be required. Modelling and justification should be provided if a scheme is to be put forward.**

I hope this update provides clarity.

## *HIGHWAYS ENGLAND –*

*(Original comments dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016)*

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the policy of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 "The Strategic Road Network and the delivery of Sustainable Development" and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), being advised on this matter by our consultants, CH2M.

## Statement of Reasons

Highways England has undertaken a review of a WSP Transport Assessment (TA) dated December 2013, accompanying an outline planning application for the Staplegrove East proposals in Taunton, Somerset.



The proposals include for only the eastern section of a wider Staplegrove masterplan site. Planning applications for both Staplegrove East and Staplegrove West sites have been submitted concurrently (two separate land owners) to allow both planning applications to be considered together and determined individually. Notwithstanding, both T.A.'s make reference to the cumulative traffic impacts of the combined site.

Highways England has previously reviewed an I-transport TA for the Staplegrove West outline planning application submission (App ref: 34/16/0007) for which a TR110 dated March 2016 was issued. This advised the planning authority not to grant planning permission for a period of 3 months, until outstanding Highways England's concerns had been addressed. Clarification was requested on the use of trip rates for an unknown residential mix i.e. flats, houses, affordable, etc, no information on development trips travelling through SAN junctions, and details regarding the improvement scheme identified to accommodate Core Strategy development (and the proposals) at M5 Junction 25.

The comments provided in this TR110, largely replicate those provided by Highways England for the Staplegrove West proposals.

#### Development proposals

The Staplegrove East proposals, and the subject of this TR110 comprise up to 915 residential dwellings, a 420 pupil primary school, 1 hectare of employment land (9,166sqm gross floor area of 81(b), B1(c) and 88 employment) and a local centre. The combined East and West proposals include an additional 715 dwellings and 1 additional hectare of employment land.

#### Site Allocation

The Taunton Deane Borough Council - Adopted Core Strategy (2011-2028) identifies the Staplegrove site as a 'broad location for growth' and suitable for a mixed land-use urban extension of between 500 and 1500 dwellings (Policy SS6).

The Staplegrove site is also identified for allocation within the emerging Taunton Deane Borough Council - Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (DSADM), which builds on the framework set out in the Core Strategy. This also sets out policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane up to 2028, Within this report, the site is identified for 1500 dwellings, with affordable housing provided at 25%, and a minimum of 2 hectares (5000sqm) of serviced employment land comprising Class B1b and c, Class B2 and Class B8 land uses.

The Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2014 Update), which identifies the infrastructure necessary to accommodate forecast growth over the plan period, identifies a need for improvement at M5 Junction 25. The scheme identified Includes for the full signalisation of the junction circulatory.

Para. 3.3.7 of the IDP states that 'whilst funding has yet to be secured for M5 Junction 25, the scheme is subject to an active funding bid to the Local Growth Fund' Highway England takes the view that if a deliverable scheme is shown to accommodate all Core Strategy development impacts at M5 Junction 25, of which the proposals are included, then Highways England would not have any objections to the planning application. Evidence is required regarding the M5 Junction 25 scheme.

If the scheme is able to accommodate development impacts, it would be necessary to attach a condition to any permission that may be granted in relation to the application that restricts the subsequent development until such time as the necessary works to M5 Junction 25 are in place

#### TA Parameters

Highways England has undertaken a review of trip rates, trip distribution and assignment associated with the proposals.

The WSP TA includes two-way trip rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM) for the residential 915 dwellings. As stated for the Staplegrove West planning application submission, Highways England would require clarification on the type of dwellings proposed at the site. The DSADM suggests 25% of housing would be affordable, which would suggest the trip rates presented in the TA are acceptable, if representative of a mix of residential houses, flats and/or affordable housing.

This approach updates advice previously provided on trip rates for the Staplegrove West planning application, but still requires confirmation on the final residential unit types before the residential trips rates are accepted by Highways England.

The WSP TA includes two-way employment trip rates of 1.166 (AM) and 0.815 (PM). The employment proposals explicitly exclude 81(a) office buildings, with 81(b) research and development and studios etc, and 81(c) light industry, with supporting storage and office uses envisaged. As such, an industrial trip rate has been presented in the TA.

With the exclusion of 81 office land uses, Highways England considers the employment trip rates to be acceptable.

The TA states internal trip percentages associated with the provision of a mixed use site and considerable scale. These include for a percentage of residential trip generation, which is now assumed to remain internal to the site. The percentages for trips travelling external to the site include:

- 95% of commuting / business journeys to be external to the Staplegrove site;
- 5% of primary school trips to be external to the site, as the proposals included a 720 pupil school. All secondary school trips will be external to

the site;

- 65% of convenience shopping trips (west site) are assumed to be external to the site. No convenience store trips from the West site are assumed to be external, as this site surrounds the proposed local centre. All wider area retail trips will be external to the site.
- 90% of recreation / social trips are to be external to the site.
- 80% of visiting / social trips are to be external to the site.

The majority of development trips are assumed to travel external to the site, travelling on the wider strategic and local highways network. Convenience and primary school trips are largely contained, and this would be expected with the provision of a new local centre and sizable primary school. Highways England considers the internal trip percentages used in the TA to be reasonable assumptions.

Development trip distribution and its assignment is presented in the TA, although this does not extend to show trips travel through M5 Junction 25. This is needed to determine the impact of the proposed development on individual junction arms, and to compare the results against any analysis that becomes available for the M5 Junction 25 signal improvement scheme. This information is requested for all land use proposals.

### Summary

Highways England accepts the principle of the proposals, and believes these to be largely consistent with Adopted Core Strategy policies. The Core Strategy documents (IDP) identifies the need for an improvement to M5 Junction 25 to accommodate forecast development traffic, of which includes the Staplegrove proposals. Highways England will require information showing the J25 improvement scheme is able to accommodate development impacts on the SAN, and would (subject to assessment) require the scheme to be provided (or phased) in relation to the proposals being occupied. This would be achieved through the use of a planning condition on any permission granted for the application. If a scheme is not forthcoming to accommodate Core Strategy development growth, then the applicant will be required to consider SAN capacity / safety issues associated with the proposals, and if necessary, mitigation in accordance with NPPF and Circular 02/2013.

Prior to this, Highways England would require clarification on the type of residential units proposed at the site, to understand the suitability of the residential trip rate presented. Trip distribution and its assignment should also be extended to show development trips travelling through M5 Junction 25 (as turning movements).

### Recommendation:

At this time, Highways England recommends that Taunton Deane Borough Council do not grant planning permission to the Staplegrove (East) proposals (Ref: 34/16/0014) for a period of 3 months.

Reason:

This is to provide the applicant with sufficient time to address outstanding Highways England concerns regarding SAN impact.

*Further comments dated 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016*

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the policy of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 *'The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development'* and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### Statement of Reasons

We have undertaken a review of a WSP Transport Assessment (TA) dated December 2013, accompanying an outline planning application for the Staplegrove East proposals in Taunton, Somerset.

The proposals include for only the eastern section of a wider Staplegrove masterplan site. Planning applications for both Staplegrove East and Staplegrove West sites have been submitted concurrently (two separate land owners) to allow both planning applications to be considered together and determined individually. Notwithstanding, both TAs make reference to the cumulative traffic impacts of the combined site.

We previously reviewed the i-transport TA for the Staplegrove West outline planning application submission (App ref: 34/16/0007) for which a TR110 dated March 2016 was issued. This advised the planning authority not to grant planning permission for a period of 3 months, until outstanding Highways England's concerns had been addressed. Clarification was requested on the use of trip rates for an unknown residential mix i.e. flats, houses, affordable, etc, no information on development trips travelling through SAN junctions, and details regarding the improvement scheme identified to accommodate Core Strategy development (and the proposals) at M5 Junction 25.

The comments provided in this HEPA largely replicate those provided by Highways England for the Staplegrove West proposals.

#### Development Proposals

The Staplegrove East proposals, and the subject of this HEPA comprise up to 915 residential dwellings, a 420 pupil primary school, 1 hectare of employment land (9,166sqm gross floor area of B1(b), 81(c) and B8 employment) and a local centre. The combined East and West proposals include an additional 715 dwellings and 1 additional hectare of employment land.

#### Site Allocation

The Taunton Deane Borough Council - Adopted Core Strategy (2011-2028) identifies the Staplegrove site as a 'broad location for growth' and suitable for a mixed land- use urban extension of between 500 and 1500 dwellings (Policy SS6).

The Staplegrove site is also identified for allocation within the emerging Taunton Deane Borough Council - Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (DSADM), which builds on the framework set out in the Core Strategy. This also sets out policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane up to 2028, Within this report, the site is identified for 1500 dwellings with affordable housing provided at 25%, and a minimum of 2 hectares (5000sqm) of serviced employment land comprising Class B1b and c, Class 82 and Class B8 land uses.

The Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2014 Update), which identifies the infrastructure necessary to accommodate forecast growth over the plan period, identifies a need for improvement at M5 Junction 25. The scheme identified includes for the full signalisation of the junction circulatory.

Para. 3.3.7 of the IDP states that 'whilst funding has yet to be secured for M5 Junction 25, the scheme is subject to an active funding bid to the Local Growth Fund' Highway England takes the view that if a deliverable scheme is shown to accommodate all Core Strategy development impacts at M5 Junction 25, of which the proposals are included, then Highways England would not have any objections to the planning application. Evidence is required regarding the M5 Junction 25 scheme.

If the scheme is able to accommodate development impacts, it would be necessary to attach a condition to any permission that may be granted in relation to the application that restricts the subsequent development until such time as the necessary works to M5 Junction 25 are in place.

#### TA Parameters

We have undertaken a review of trip rates, trip distribution and assignment associated with the proposals.

The WSP TA includes two-way trip rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM) for the residential 915 dwellings. As stated for the Staplegrove West planning application submission, Highways England would require clarification on the type of dwellings proposed at the site. The DSADM suggests 25% of housing would be affordable, which would suggest the trip rates presented in the TA are acceptable, if representative of a mix of residential houses, flats and/or affordable housing.

This approach updates advice previously provided on trip rates for the Staplegrove West planning application, but still requires confirmation on the final residential unit types before the residential trips rates are accepted by Highways England.

The WSP TA includes two-way employment trip rates of 1.166 (AM) and 0.815 (PM). The employment proposals explicitly exclude B1(a) office buildings, with B1(b) research and development and studios etc, and B1(c) light industry, with supporting storage and office uses envisaged. As such, an industrial trip rate has been presented in the TA.

With the exclusion of B1 office land uses, we consider the employment trip rates to

be acceptable.

The TA states internal trip percentages associated with the provision of a mixed use site and considerable scale. These include for a percentage of residential trip generation, which is now assumed to remain internal to the site. The percentages for trips travelling external to the site include:

- 95% of commuting / business journeys to be external to the Staplegrove site;
- 5% of primary school trips to be external to the site, as the proposals included a 720 pupil school. All secondary school trips will be external to the site;
- 65% of convenience shopping trips (west site) are assumed to be external to the site. No convenience store trips from the West site are assumed to be external, as this site surrounds the proposed local centre. All wider area retail trips will be external to the site.
- 90% of recreation / social trips are to be external to the site.
- 80% of visiting / social trips are to be external to the site.

The majority of development trips are assumed to travel external to the site, travelling on the wider strategic and local highways network. Convenience and primary school trips are largely contained, and this would be expected with the provision of a new local centre and sizable primary school. Highways England considers the internal trip percentages used in the TA to be reasonable assumptions.

Development trip distribution and its assignment is presented in the TA, although this does not extend to show trips travel through M5 Junction 25. This is needed to determine the impact of the proposed development on individual junction arms, and to compare the results against any analysis that becomes available for the M5 Junction 25 signal improvement scheme. This information is requested for all land use proposals.

### Summary

Highways England previously provided a formal recommendation in response to the above planning application on 3 June 2016. This detailed the further assessment that would be needed in order to enable Highways England to fully understand the impact of the proposals on the SRN. Our current response should be read in conjunction with our previous comments.

Work is continuing to take place with the applicant's transport consultants, i-Transport, but has not yet reached a stage where we can provide the planning authority with informed comments to enable appropriate planning conditions to be recommended.

### Recommendation:

At this time, Highways England recommends that Taunton Deane Borough Council does not grant planning permission to the Staplegrove (East) proposals (Ref: 34/16/0014) for a further period of 3 months from the date of this recommendation.

### Reason:

This is to provide the applicant with sufficient time to address outstanding Highways England concerns regarding SAN impact.

*Final comments dated 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017.*

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the current of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 *"The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development"* and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### Statement of Reasons

The Staplegrove East proposals (WSP) include 915 residential dwellings (mixed), 1ha of B1(c)/B2/B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA), including a local centre and a two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils).

Development is to be phased around an internal site spine road which will connect both the Staplegrove West and East proposals.

Whilst not part of this planning application submission, the Staplegrove West proposals comprise 713 residential dwellings (mixed) and 1ha of B1(c)/B2/B8 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA).

In terms of development phasing, the Transport Assessment (TA) indicates that phase 1 development would commence before the internal spine road is completed, and for each development site this level of development would include:

- 326 residential dwellings residential dwellings, the primary school and 0.5 hectares of employment land on Staplegrove East
- 200 residential dwellings on Staplegrove West

#### Trip Rates / Trip Generation

The applicant presented two-way residential trip rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM). The peak hour trip rates are low for standard private housing, but represent a combined mix of housing types and tenure, inclusive of flats and affordable housing provision, for which display lower trip rate values. As such, the residential trip rates have been accepted.

For employment, B1 office development is explicitly excluded from the type of development that can occupy the site, and this is to be controlled via a planning condition. B1(a) office development is largest peak hour trip generator of all other B1 land uses, but which is not assumed, nor tested in the planning application submission TA. As such, this level of traffic has not been tested for SAN impact and therefore is not supported by this planning application submission.

B1 employment is to be limited to B1(b) research and B1(c) light industry development and/or include B2 general industry and B8 storage land uses. A combined industrial two-way employment trip rate of 1.166 (AM) and 0.815 (PM) has been agreed.

Due to the mixed land use nature of the proposals, the TA is able to command a sizeable degree of trip internalisation. We believe some values to be a little over optimistic for internalisation, be these relate to land uses that do not produce wider strategic journeys made on the SAN. Convenience and education trips are largely assumed to be contained internal to the site, as would be expected with the provision of a new local centre and sizable primary school. Beyond the site boundary, trips will extend to neighbouring residential areas and Taunton centre, although no educational or convenience shopping trips are expected to travel on the SAN.

Total weekday peak hour trip generation (after internal trip deductions) is set out below.

	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Dep</u>	<u>Tot</u>	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Dep</u>	<u>Tot</u>
Residential	152	555	707	481	274	755
Employment	104	63	167	29	83	112
School	82	78	160	9	13	
						22
Total	338	696	1034	519	370	889

### Trip Distribution / Assignment

Using National Travel Survey (NTS) data, a gravity model and 2011 Travel to/from work census data, trip distribution has been identified for M5 J25 for both employment and residential development trips. Highways England has accepted that 8% of development trips for residential and 13% of employment trips will travel via MS J25, largely travelling to/from the general areas of Bridgwater and Yeovil. Given the position of the site, a number of trips that would travel to Bridgwater have assumed a route via Taunton Road and/or via the A38 and to Yeovil via Haydon Lane. Wellington is also a destination/origin for trips with the A38 offering the most direct and fastest journey option. This route through to M5 J26, has also been assumed for development trips identified to travel south on the M5 to Exeter.

The percentages now included in the TA are believed to be a good representation of the routes that traffic will take between origins/destinations. These results have been compared to Highways England's own trip distribution calculations using 2011 census data for the Taunton Deane MSOA (ref 008), and similar values have been realised.

Traffic assignment has taken account of the most direct or fastest route possible, considering local highway network constraints during weekday peak hours.

### SAN Impact

For the Staplegrove proposals, Policy 21 of DfT Circular 02/2013 applies and states that, *'where development proposals are consistent with an adopted Local Plan, the Highways Agency (Highways England) does not anticipate the need for engagement in a full assessment process at the planning application stage. In such*



*circumstances, considerations will normally be limited to the agreement of the details of the transport solution, including any necessary mitigation measures, and to ensuring that the transport impacts are included in the overall environmental assessment provided to the local planning authority, rather than the principle of the development itself'.*

The Staplegrove site is included within the Taunton Deane Borough Council Local Plan as a location for residential led development. Associated with the Local Plan, the Taunton Deane Borough Council infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) dated December 2014, identifies existing congestion hotspots in the borough and the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Core Strategy objectives and development allocations. Para. 3.34 of the IDP states that there are a number of major highway schemes required to deliver the Core Strategy of which 'improvements to J25 of the M5' are identified. Somerset County Council (in conjunction with Highways England) have identified an improvement scheme for M5 Junction 25 which includes full signalisation of the junction.

Whilst it is assumed that the IDP scheme will be implemented at M5 J25 in the medium term, it has been a requirement for the Staplegrove proposals to determine if their own impact can be accommodated at the junction in advance of the IDP scheme.

With combined Staplegrove development traffic (East and West sites), traffic modelling shows that the M5 southbound off-slip receives an extra 16 vehicles in the AM peak, increasing the expected flow on the off-slip in 2018 from 1,881vph to 1,897vph. This modest increase in traffic flow would result in a 4 vehicle increase on the slip road and a 2 second increase in journey delay. In the PM peak, the junction is shown to operate with increased capacity compared to the AM peak, with the impact of the Staplegrove development traffic more concentrated on the local highway network approaches to the junction. This still has a small impact on SAN approaches, although only a single vehicle impact on the sensitive M5 southbound off-slip.

Somerset County Council's improvement scheme for J25 (anticipated for 2020/21) will include significant junction enhancements (including the installation of a fully signalised roundabout) which will accommodate Local Plan allocated developments including the Staplegrove proposals. By this time the developer anticipates a relatively small proportion of houses will have been built.

On this basis, Highways England recommends that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted.

#### Planning condition 1

'No part of the development hereby approved shall include B1(a) office development as defined by the 'Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

#### Reason:

'To limit weekday peak hour employment development trips to a level for which the M5 Junction 25 capacity has been tested. To ensure the safe and effective operation of the strategic road network.'

## *HOUSING ENABLING –*

25% of the new housing should be in the form of affordable homes. The tenure split should be 60% social rented 40% intermediate housing in the form of shared ownership. The type and size of the affordable housing units to be provided should fully reflect the distribution of property types and sizes in the overall development. 10% of the total affordable housing provision should be in the form of fully adapted disabled units. These homes should comply with a recognised and approved wheelchair design guide.

I have looked into the identified housing need for Staplegrove and the surrounding area and the required mix would be:

15% 1 beds to include some flats and some maisonette style properties with own garden and own front door

40% 2 beds to include some flats and houses

35% 3 bed houses

10% 4 bed houses

It is noted that Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 is being wound up and we would therefore seek for the properties to be constructed to the relevant standards that supersede this at the date of approval of the planning application.

Whilst no indication of the location of the affordable units within the scheme has yet been provided, this should be an integral part of the development and should not be visually distinguishable from the market housing on site. In addition, the affordable housing is to be evenly distributed across the site/phases and in clusters of no more than 15 units. The practicalities of managing and maintaining units will be taken into account when agreeing the appropriate spatial distribution of affordable housing on site. Additional guidance is available within the Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The affordable housing scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Housing Enabling Lead at Taunton Deane Borough Council. Early engagement with the Housing Enabling Lead to agree the affordable housing provision is recommended. The developer should seek to provide the Housing Association tied units from Taunton Deane's preferred affordable housing development partners list.

## *POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICER –*

Crime Prevention Design Advisor's (CPDA) working in partnership within the South West region, have a responsibility for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design projects within the Taunton Deane Borough Council area. As a Police Service we offer advice and guidance on how the built environment can influence crime and disorder to create safer communities addressing the potential of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sections 58 and 69 of the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 both require crime and disorder and fear of crime to be considered in the design stage of a development and ask for:-

"Safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime,

do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion."

Guidance is given considering 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design', 'Secured by Design' principles and 'Safer Places'.

Comments:-

1. Crime & ASB Statistics- reported crime for the area of the proposed development during the period 01/09/2015 – 29/02/2016 (within 500 metre radius of the grid reference) is as follows:-

Burglary - 2 Offences (both non-dwelling)

Violence against the Person - 1 Offence

Total - 3 Offences

Currently, this is a very low crime level.

ASB reports for the same area and period total 2, which is also a very low level.

2. Design & Access Statement – the DAS at para. 5.13 headed 'Community Safety' refers to the seven attributes of safe, sustainable communities particularly relevant to crime prevention, which indicates to me that the applicants have considered these principles in the design of the proposal. At this outline stage, it is difficult to provide specific advice, however, I would make the following initial observations:-

3. Layout of Roads & Footpaths – vehicular and pedestrian routes should be designed to be visually open and direct and likely to be well used. They should not undermine the defensible space of neighbourhoods. As far as is possible, routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles should run alongside one another and not be segregated.

4. Communal Areas - such as playgrounds and seating areas have the potential to generate crime, the fear of crime and ASB. They should be designed to allow supervision from nearby dwellings with safe routes for users to come and go. Boundaries between public and private space must be clearly defined and open spaces must have features which prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

5. Layout & Orientation of Dwellings – dwellings should be positioned facing each other to allow neighbours to easily view their surroundings and make the potential offender feel vulnerable to detection. The principle of 'public fronts' and 'private backs' should be adopted wherever possible.

6. Dwelling Boundaries – it is important that the boundary between public and private areas is clearly defined. For the majority of developments, it is desirable for dwelling frontages to be open to view to assist resident surveillance of the street and public spaces, so walls, fences, hedging should be kept low, maximum height 1 metre. More vulnerable side and rear of buildings require more robust defensive barriers in the form of walls, fencing, hedging or similar to a minimum height of 1.8 metres. Commercial units may require additional measures.

7. Rear Access Footpaths – research shows that the majority of burglaries occur at the rear of dwellings, so it is preferable that footpaths are not placed at the back of properties.

8. Planting/Landscaping – planting should not impede opportunities for natural surveillance and, in areas where visibility is important, shrubs should be selected which have a maximum growth height of 1 metre and trees should be devoid of foliage below 2 metres, so allowing a 1 metre clear field of vision. Open branched

and columnar trees should be used in a landscaping scheme where natural or formal surveillance is required. Care should also be taken to avoid any potential hiding places.

9. Building Design – Blank building elevations, both commercial and residential, should be avoided so providing a sense of natural surveillance to the development. Any potential climbing aids should be designed out and the potential vulnerability of roofs taken into account in respect of the commercial units.

10. Security Bollards/Street Furniture – any commercial premises where there is a possibility of a vehicle borne attack should be protected by secure bollards, either 'natural', fixed or rising bollards. Hard landscaping, e.g. planters or similar street furniture could be used. Public Art and similar features should be of substantial construction and vandal resistant.

11. Street Lighting – street lighting for adopted highways and footpaths, private estate roads and footpaths and car parks should comply with BS 5489-1:2013. Lighting should be set at a uniform level ensuring that there are no over lit areas causing light pollution nor poorly lit areas where crime or ASB could flourish.

12. Car Parking (Residential) – cars should be parked in locked garages or on a hard-standing within the dwelling boundary. Where communal parking areas are essential, they should be in small groups, close and adjacent to homes they serve and within view of active rooms in those homes. Rear car parking courtyards are discouraged as they introduce access to the vulnerable rear elevations of dwellings where the majority of burglaries occur.

13. Primary School – the comments made in the DAS regarding the security of the school I fully support and I would also refer the applicants to the SBD schools design guide mentioned below which contains additional comprehensive security advice appropriate to schools.

14. Secured by Design (SBD) – the applicant appears to be aware of this police initiative which is referred to in the DAS and is encouraged to refer to the additional comprehensive advice contained within the recently updated 'SBD Homes 2016', 'SBD Commercial 2015' and 'SBD New Schools 2014' design guides, together with the interactive CAD 3D design guides, available on the police approved SBD website – [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com).

If planning permission is granted, I would be pleased to work with the applicant at the detailed design stage in order to 'design out' crime and disorder in this major mixed use redevelopment.

#### *THE QUANTOCK HILLS AONB SERVICE –*

The following comments are made having met with Taunton Deane's Landscape Officer (Barbara Collier) on site and latterly with Catherine Pinney of the National Trust.

The Quantock Hills AONB has serious concerns regarding the above planning application and we object to the proposals as submitted. Our comments are made in respect of potential adverse impact on the nationally protected landscape of the

Quantock Hills AONB - England's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The juxtaposition of the Quantock Hills with the Vale of Taunton Deane makes for a very important perceptual relationship. Whilst we recognise the setting of the AONB is not protected, Taunton Deane's own LCA recognises the importance of the relationship between the Vale and the protected landscape. The National Character Area description recognises them as so intrinsically linked in terms of character that they are mapped together and form a joint description (NCA 146: Vale of Taunton Deane and Quantock Fringes). Therefore, change within the vale, in relatively close proximity to the Quantock Hills, is highly likely to bring about change to the protected landscape and our concerns related to this are outlined below.

The preservation of the setting and character of the AONB is supported by the Vision for Taunton in the adopted Core Strategy, which states:

*"Despite accommodating substantial levels of growth, the urban form of Taunton will remain self-contained, below ridge lines which are sensitive to development and preserving the setting and character of the Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB."*

#### The scale of the urban extension reducing the transition between urban environment and nationally protected landscape

We are concerned that the extent of the development will reduce the important physical and perceptual sense of separation between the urban edge of Taunton and entry into the protected landscape. There is currently a distance of around 3km separating Taunton from the Quantock Hills but this will be reduced by around 1 km should outline permission be granted. The proposal site is agricultural and offers a quality rural environment on the approach to the protected landscape. We believe the size of the proposed development will bring the urban area too far north into the landscape setting of the Quantock Hills. What will be a total change in character from an agricultural to urban/suburban environment threatens the quality of the landscape that currently offers a comfortable transition between the nationally protected landscape and the county town of Taunton.

Your Landscape Officer notes the number of proposed houses, combined with Staplegrove West, to be greater than the allocation. We believe that should development occur in this area the threshold for housing numbers should be at the lower end of the allocation and should certainly not be over and above the maximum allocation. This proposal site forms part of the landscape setting to England's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, we believe, the scale of the proposals suggests the importance of the proposal site's relationship to the AONB is not being fully recognised.

#### Urbanisation of Kingston Road

Kingston Road provides a rural approach into the protected landscape and is the main gateway into the Quantocks from Taunton. On the approach to Taunton along Kingston Road there is no drawn out sense of entering an urban environment. Instead, there is currently a subtle and comfortable shift from a hedge and oak lined road into the more suburban landscape around the Corkscrew Lane junction. We

believe the highways proposals as they stand will dramatically change the character of this road, particularly in light of the proposed roundabout. A roundabout would appear unnecessary for this development - the collection of urban lighting, kerbing, signage, road markings and the roundabout itself will all impact on the rural character of Kingston Road at this point. We are also concerned that the provision of such highways infrastructure would ease the facilitation of further development around this sensitive area in the future. The roundabout would mean the loss of a number of standard oak trees that make a significant contribution to the character of the landscape in this local area and we believe they should not be removed.

The submitted plans show a number of buildings located around the roundabout and labelled as mixed use and employment. Whilst no details appear to be included to show what these buildings might look like it is very likely that they would be taller than the adjacent housing and would have a significant visual impact on the area around the roundabout as well as giving it a much more urban appearance. Car parking would also be likely to be needed to serve these buildings. We consider that this would be a significant detriment to Kingston Road as it approaches the AONB. If, despite our concerns, the proposals were approved and this area were to be used for this purpose and a roundabout constructed, then the buildings should be set further back from the roundabout, allowing a scheme of structural planting to be incorporated. We recommend that a separate detailed Masterplan be required for this area and the rest of Kingston Road.

We are unable to see a viewpoint assessment looking along Kingston Road towards the Quantocks. We feel this is an essential view to illustrate how the character along Kingston Road will change as people move out of the urban area into the what is currently open countryside but what will become the urban extension (with housing, a nursing home, a roundabout and commercial centre all in the view as well as the loss of oak trees and the roadside re-profiling required). We therefore request that a viewpoint along Kingston Road towards the AONB be provided with photomontage and narrative so that it can be considered as part of this outline application.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment considers views from the AONB, but not views towards the AONB. Given the closeness of the development to the AONB we consider this is a significant omission. There will be certain existing views to the hills which will be blocked by the new development. These impacts should be assessed at the outline application stage. Also there may be opportunities to consider how new and existing views towards the hills could be incorporated into the design and layout of the new development.

#### Views from the hills

The viewpoints considered within/on the edge of the AONB (Views 0, P, Q and R) are representative of some viewing experiences from the southern part of the AONB, and it is rightly considered that receptors here are highly sensitive to change. The photomontages demonstrate that the development would be visible from the hills and although effects are judged to be minor-adverse or neutral, we request that the montages be viewed at the appropriate scale and distance on site as part of your assessment to ensure you are satisfied with these judgements (particularly with respect to the minor- adverse judgement}. We cannot stress enough the

importance of these judgements being accurate - a minor-adverse effect is still an adverse effect. We are in no way suggesting the LVIA is inaccurate but we are seeking reassurance that you have checked and are satisfied with the judgements made. An underestimation of effects may result in moderate-adverse (significant) effect which would be contrary to the primary purpose and statutory duty of conserving and enhancing an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### Floodlighting

As well as concerns generally regarding the increase in lighting and the impact this may have on Quantock night views, we are very concerned about the position of sports pitches at the northeast edge of the development - will these be floodlit? If minded to approve this scheme, we request that the pitches, if located in this area, are not permitted to be floodlit or alternatively they are located elsewhere in the development. In any case, floodlighting in this development would impact on night views from the Quantock Hills and should be carefully managed through the design of the lighting and time restrictions on its use.

### Setting of Pyrland Hall

Whilst sitting outside of the AONB boundary Pyrland Hall is typical of the large country house and estates landscapes that sit at the edge of the Quantock Hills and characterise the greater-Quantock landscape. We are very concerned by the photomontage that shows a dramatic change in the character of views looking out from the main house.

### Bat Mitigation Woodland Buffer and adjacent agricultural land

It is unclear how the shape of the proposed bat mitigation woodland buffer had been determined - the rather geometric form of the woodland does not appear to relate to the pattern of woodland in the surrounding landscape.

The plans show an area of agricultural land located between the bat mitigation woodlands and the proposed housing development. We understand it is to remain as agricultural land, but are concerned that it may be promoted for further development in the future, bringing the urban environment even closer to the AONB . Should the Council be minded to allow permission for the development we would like to see a condition or planning obligation attached to the permission to restrict this land to agricultural or habitat enhancement use.

The plans for the development show that it is proposed to underground the electricity pylons within the development boundary. Should you be minded to approve the proposals, the beneficial impact of pylon and overhead wire removal could be greatly increased by undergrounding other pylons outside of the development site (that are on the same power lines). We would ask the Council, therefore, to consider requesting an additional Section 106 contribution from the developer towards undertaking further undergrounding in association with the power companies and local landowners.

In summary, whilst we have highlighted a number of specific concerns regarding the outline plans, our primary concern regarding this development proposal is the size of the scheme pushing too far north into the setting of the nationally protected

Quantock Hills AONB, which we fear will adversely affect the important connection between the Quantock Hills and the Vale of Taunton Deane.

### *LANDSCAPE OFFICER (TDBC) –*

The Methodology and terminology for the Landscape assessments for both Staplegrove West and Staplegrove East was agreed with the Council and the two landscape consultants working on the two developments, prior the submission of this application.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by the Nicholas Pearson Partnership has been submitted in support of the eastern section of the Staplegrove urban extension. The LVIA, as would be expected, provides an introduction to the development, describes the methodology used, and gives a baseline description of the site, and legislative and policy framework relevant to the development. Relevant planning policies have been listed and general previous studies have been consulted.

#### Landscape character

The document refers to the National Landscape Character Areas, the Council's relevant Landscape Character Areas and then goes on to subdivide these areas further into ten Local landscape character Areas. The magnitude of impact on character (with and without Staplegrove West) on some of the areas was judged to be High adverse. This is due to the change from agricultural land (including the loss of hedgerows) to built form.

#### Visual Context

The visual assessment was made using 21 viewpoints taken around the site and up to 6km distant to north at Cothelstone Hill located in the Quantocks AONB. Visual considerations relate to views of the landscape afforded by 5 different types of receptor (residents, road users, footpath users, education facility users and agricultural workers) .The visual receptors most affected by the proposal would be existing residents on Whitemore Lane and Corkscrew Lane, particularly during the construction phase. I also consider that the road users on Kingston Road will also be affected by the proposal.

The document also considers cumulative effects of development. (GLVIA 3 guidance refers to cumulative effects as the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of developments taken together .These can be landscape or visual effects likely to occur where inter visibility of the development allows two or more to be seen from key viewpoints.)

#### My Concerns

- Scale of development. The combined number of houses proposed for the east and west development is more than the allocation of 15 00
- The development will impact on existing landscape features in the form of removal of existing hedgerow and the felling of existing trees. The felling of the mature oak trees on Kingston Road causes me the most concern.
- The development currently involves the construction of a roundabout on Kingston Road which would greatly affect the enclosed leafy character of this rural



road. Kingston Road is the town's main route to the Quantocks Hills AONB.

- Is a roundabout necessary? Could the most eastern section of the development be accessed off Hope Corner Lane?
- Could the spine road be doglegged and a roundabout positioned at the junction of Hope Corner Lane?
- Could the local centre be placed more centrally within the development? Possibly closer to the school?
- On plan, the development does not appear to relate well to the Staplegrove West development, which appears more fluid and organic in layout. This development feels more geometric.
- The development appears to jut out into the open countryside to the north, thus reducing the buffer between the AONB boundary at Kingston St Mary (Gateway to the AONB) and the urban area of Taunton. The proposed development appears to extend further than the allocation.
- The development is located within the Bat Consultation Zone and will have an impact on Hestercombe House SAC. Hence the need for extensive mitigation tree planting.
- The development does not respect the Staplegrove Green Wedge extension. The Wedge extension is necessary to help to maintain separate identities for the Staplegrove West proposal as an extension of Staplegrove village and the Staplegrove east proposal as an extension to Taunton.
- I have concerns about lighting details. The playing fields on the edge of the development may be lit, thus contributing to light pollution in the countryside.
- The development encroaches upon the designed historic landscape of Grade 2\* Pyrland Hall
- The success of the landscape strategy will depend on landscape management and maintenance establishment of woodland buffer and SUOs features. There is no mention at this outline stage on who will maintain the landscaping.
- Along with full details of proposed landscaping, a detailed Construction management Plan (CEMP) as well as a Landscape and Ecological management plan (LEMP) is required for the development

*(Further comments dated 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017)*

The replacement of the roundabout with a signalised junction will unfortunately still result in the felling of mature trees. The visual impact will remain the same.

#### **TREE OFFICER -**

In general, there are numerous mature trees throughout the site, mainly within the existing countryside hedgerows but also within the old parkland of Pyrland Hall and within gardens of adjacent private dwellings.

a) The layout and design of the development should aim to retain and incorporate as many of the most significant trees throughout the site. These trees should be seen as an asset to the development.

b) Most of the significant trees in the area have already been protected by Tree Preservation Orders. I have attached an overall plan from 'Mapinfo' showing the protected trees in red. I have also attached the relevant TPO documents.

- c) There may be other significant trees, not yet protected by TPO, which should be retained, along with as much of the existing countryside hedgerows as possible.
- d) The development should be designed so that it takes account of the findings of a full BS5837 tree survey and its resulting Tree Constraints Plan. The design should be such that it does not encroach upon the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of the trees that are to be retained. The design should be such that it can be built whilst the RPAs are fully protected by fencing in accordance with BS5837.
- e) The layout of the development should be such that it does not harm the significant trees that are just off-site.
- f) The current proposed Masterplan indicates that certain TPO trees are to be removed in order to make way for roads. It appears that trees T11 and T12 of TD1073 and T5 and T6 of TD1088 are under threat. I would like to see an attempt to re-design the road layout so that these trees can be retained.
- g) I would fully support new tree planting as part of the landscape scheme for the development, particularly native broadleaves and areas of new community woodland.

*(Further comments dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016)*

Further to my comment on this application, could I strengthen my objection to the removal of TPO trees TD1088 T4, T5 and T6? These trees are either side of Kingston Road, just north of Okehills. The proposed new junction seems not to have taken them into account. There appears to be space north of these trees for the junction. The trees are healthy and mature, not easily replaced.

*NATURAL ENGLAND –*

*(Original comments dated – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016)*

European designated sites – Hestercombe House Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Test of Likely Significance (“Habitats Regulations Assessment” (HRA)) has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC and has concluded that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC.

Natural England therefore supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 119 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. If these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and we would object on that basis.

One issue we would like to highlight is the wording in condition 1 regarding the area of replacement habitat. The current wording states that this enhancement shall be planted “at the earliest opportunity”. We recommend that this wording is made more specific. During discussions in relation to the Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) in November 2015, we supported the SOCG on the basis that the wording would specify that “the planting will occur before or on day one of commencement”.

*(Further comments dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017) –*

Please be advised that Natural England's comments remain the same as those in relation to the Habitats Regulations Assessment in our letter of 30 August 2016.

#### **BIODIVERSITY OFFICER –**

Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement covers Ecology and Nature Conservation. The chapter was prepared in collaboration with Staplegrove West because of the close proximity and cross boundary issues shared between the two sites

Wildwood Consultants and Andrew's Ecology Ltd carried out the Ecological reports for Staplegrove East, whilst AA Environmental Ltd carried out the ecological reports for Staplegrove West. The two ecologists have carried out extensive survey work on the site over a number of years.

This application site was dominated by arable fields although there were other fields used for cattle grazed pasture. Hedgerows formed the majority of field boundaries on site. Semi mature and mature standard trees included oak and sycamore. A row of semi mature hybrid poplars ran north south across the site.

All buildings and hard standing were located within the existing green wedge and consequently outside of the application site

The site lies within the Bat Consultation Zone for Hestercombe House SAC which supports a colony of lesser horseshoe bats. The mitigation strategy has been agreed with TDBC, SCC and NE.

Policy TAU 2 was tested against The Habitat Regs Assessment. The HRA concluded that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect on protected species.

It is also considered that there will be no residual impact to Silk mills LNR

#### **Badgers**

Badgers are active on site. As a main and two outlier setts were found on site, a number of setts may require closure under licence from Natural England.

The fields of the Green Wedge should be enhanced for badgers

#### **Birds**

A range of bird species were recorded on site -A total of 27 species of bird during the early survey and 34 during the late survey. Of these, thirteen species are classed as birds of conservation concern.

A compensation package for skylark should be taken into consideration.

Barn owl pellets were recorded in a hollow veteran tree close to the centre of the application site, but there was no evidence of breeding.

The development will result in loss of foraging and nesting habitat for birds.

Vegetation should only be removed outside of the bird nesting season and vegetation to be retained should be protected.

I support the proposal to incorporate bird boxes into the design of houses.

### Dormice

The dormice survey was carried out on site in 2014 and 2015 . Dormice were recorded in a number of hedgerows on site. As the development is likely to impact on dormice an EPS licence will be required prior to the removal of hedgerows. Designing of sensitive road junctions is advised to facilitate the dispersal of dormice

### Great crested Newts.

The Great Crested newt survey and outline mitigation strategy was carried out in July 2015. There are 36 ponds within a 500m radius of the boundary of the site. Thirteen of these ponds had a score of >0.5 and so were surveyed. Seven ponds were found to contain populations of great crested newts. These ponds will be retained within the development.

I consider that pond 15 should have a larger buffer than proposed.

In the present design, pond D appears quite isolated. I would like to see improved connectivity.

It appears that pond C is to be lost to the development. Could the pond be retained and enhanced?

Requirement for an additional licence for Great crested newts will depend on the proximity of the works to ponds and terrestrial habitat. The ponds likely to be affected are ponds D, 15 (as highlighted), and to a lesser extent ponds 9 and 11.

A receptor area on site should be enhanced for newts. Capture of newts can occur throughout the active season (February - October)

I support a monitoring plan to assess whether the GCN population has responded to the proposed mitigation and site management.

### Otter

No evidence of otters was found on site although otters are active in the area. Buffers will be retained along watercourses on site

### Lighting

Dpa lighting consultants carried out an Environmental Lighting Impact assessment for Staplegrove West and East as well as solely for Staplegrove East.

Introducing lighting into otherwise unlit environment cannot be achieved without impact. From an ecological viewpoint, measures will need to be applied to maintain dark corridors for bats.

On the assumption that the developments follow best practice in the control of obtrusive lighting and that the landscaping scheme is successfully established then light spill on sensitive habitats could be kept to a minimum.

Lighting in connection with the construction phase should be should be carefully controlled by a Construction Environmental Management plan (CEMP)

### Condition for protected species:

The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of a strategy (as modified to meet the requirements of any Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses) to protect and enhance the development for wildlife and their habitats has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be based on the advice of the submitted Environmental Statement dated March 2016, the advice of all the surveys undertaken for the site and further up to date surveys and include:

1. Details of protective measures to include method statements to avoid impacts on all wildlife during all stages of development;
2. Details of the timing of works to avoid periods of work when wildlife could be harmed by disturbance.
3. Measures for the enhancement of places of rest for wildlife.
4. Details of a lighting strategy
5. A Construction Environmental management plan (CEMP)
6. A Landscape and Ecological management plan (LEMP)

Once approved the works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timing of the works, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the scheme for the maintenance and provision of the new habitats, new bird boxes, bat boxes and related accesses have been fully implemented. Thereafter the resting places and agreed accesses shall be permanently maintained

Reason: to protect and enhance the site for wildlife.

### Condition

Once the first phase of development has commenced Ecological monitoring of the site for a period of time to be agreed by the applicant and the LPA, shall be undertaken.

Reason: To ensure that the long-term management of the site is informed, to identify where the existing maintenance regime requires modification, to assess the efficacy of the EPS licenses and also to comply with the HRA

### Informative Note

1. The condition relating to wildlife requires the submission of information to protect species. The Local Planning Authority will expect to see a detailed method statement clearly stating how wildlife and their habitats will be protected through the development process and be provided with a mitigation proposal that will maintain favourable status for these species that are affected by this development proposal.
2. The condition also requires the submission of a lighting strategy and a landscape and ecological management Plan and a Construction Environmental management plan for the site.
3. It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and the developer should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for

planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

4. Bats Dormice and great crested newts are known to use the site. The species concerned are European Protected Species within the meaning of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. If the local population of European Protected Species are affected in a development, a licence must be obtained from Natural England in accordance with the above regulations. NE requires that the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that derogation from the Habitats Directive is justified prior to issuing such a licence.

5. Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Planning and licensing applications are separate Legal Functions.

#### *SOMERSET ECOLOGY SERVICES -*

Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority may proceed with or consent to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

The County Ecologist has prepared two separate 'Tests of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), one for each of the Staplegrove applications, under a Service Level Agreement. These were then sent to Natural England for their comments. The mitigation for both applications has been dealt with as a cohesive whole and there are no issues have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements.

Following the new information provided under a Regulation 22 submission in December 2016, the County Ecologist commented further that he had reviewed the updated ecology material and considered that no update to the Habitats Regulations Assessment was needed.

*(Further comments dated 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017)*

I have agreed the following wording with Natural England for the last sentence of the first requirement/condition in the HRA:

- This enhancement will be planted within the first planting season, October to March, following permission unless otherwise agreed with the Borough Council.

## SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST –

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this planning application. Our response covers both the direct environmental impacts of this development and our vision for how this development could contribute to a network of well connected green spaces across the town that bring multiple benefits for people and wildlife.

### Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure

Somerset Wildlife Trust have worked in partnership with Somerset County Council to map the ecological networks in the county. Maps of Somerset's Ecological networks are now available to Local Planning Authorities through the Somerset Environmental Records Centre. Under the National Planning policy Framework Local planning Authorities should use the planning system to, *'...contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, ... minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline of biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'*

We support the retention of areas of woodland mapped as woodland stepping stones within Somerset's Ecological Network. Their connections to the Green Wedge Network either directly or indirectly via hedges and green corridors will minimise the degree of isolation of these patches caused by the surrounding development. However, the inclusion of sports pitches and the school site in the centre of the green wedge will decrease the overall wildlife value of the green wedge and will detract from the feel of the green wedge "bringing the countryside into the town" which is a stated policy objective of green wedges in Taunton Deane.

We welcome the consideration that has been shown to maintaining connections for wildlife through the site in the retention of a high proportion of the hedges and mature trees. Links to the wider countryside in the form of continuous hedgerows is essential, especially for the dormouse population as although hedges through the site are being retained, through the development phase and once the site is occupied conditions may no longer be suitable for dormice and the population will need to be able to move into the wider countryside.

The design of the site incorporates hedges and green corridors into pedestrian and cycle routes across the site turning them into connections for wildlife and people. However, lighting along these routes is likely to limit use of these areas as corridors by bats. The proposed mitigation measures for the control of light pollution outlined in chapter 9 of the Environmental statement must be implemented.

We support the inclusion of allotments, orchards and public open space within the green wedge. We also support the routing of pedestrian and cycle routes through the open space on site as this will increase the number of encounters that people have with nature as they move through the site. We noted that in the design of Staplegrove West open spaces were on the periphery of the development and were in danger of becoming underused as people would need to make a particular effort to visit them.

### Impact on Habitats and Species

We are pleased to see that a significant number of trees and amount of hedgerow will be retained as these are important features in the landscape and the retention of mature trees through the development site will mirror features in the wider

landscape, particularly on the neighbouring Pryland Park Local Wildlife Site. However, we regret to see that 4 trees with Tree Preservation Orders will be removed as a result of the development. The net gain in terms of tree canopy cited in the *Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree protection Plan* will take a number of years before this has any real benefit to wildlife using the site following development. We support the proposal for a phased development of the site but strict timescales for habitat creation and improvement should be agreed with the LPA with the work carried out as soon as possible to allow habitats to mature and species to move to them. This would contribute to providing “adequate provision for tree cover to compensate for this loss” as stated in Policy EN6 of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Local Plan.

Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Policy 8 states that “Proposals that will have an adverse impact on Natura 2000...sites and/or features which provide ecological support for their conservation objectives will not be supported”. As the site falls almost completely within the Bat Consultation Zone for Hestercombe House Special Area of Conservation and lesser horseshoe bats have been recorded on the site which may be from the Hestercombe House population a test of significance is required (Also stated in CP 8) to demonstrate that the Hestercombe House SAC will remain in favourable condition before the application can be properly considered.

Despite the land itself being of low ecological value, it is likely that the grassland within the site boundary is used for foraging by birds recorded on site such as barn owls, swifts and swallows as well as lesser horseshoe bats which may be part of the Hestercombe House SAC population. There are a number of European Protected Species using the site including great crested newts, badgers, dormice and 10 or more bat species. This is not insignificant. We would recommend that as a planning condition mitigation measures outlined in the Environmental Statement and other application documents must be approved by the Local Planning Authority and implemented. The mitigation for this development should show a willingness to go beyond statutory obligations and create a vibrant, wildlife-rich living space.

We would recommend that the following documents are produced and approved by the Local Planning Authority before a decision regarding this application can be made;

- A Construction Environmental Management Plan including information on the protection of water quality in Back Stream and action that will be taken to minimise the impact of lighting on bats
- A Landscape and Ecological Management plan including information on the planting and future management of orchards, hedgerows and public open space within the development site
- Details of how the development will maintain the coherence and resilience of ecological networks in the area, with particular focus on dormice and bat species
- Details of a lighting plan which will have minimal impact on bat populations
- Details of off-site planting and habitat management to mitigate for any on-site loss of habitat

To ensure that the benefits to people and wildlife are maximised, management plans relating to green space and ecological mitigation should be agreed for a period of at least 10 years as many of the habitat improvements will not be secured after a period of only 5 years as is outlined in the Environmental Statement. The green



space management plan should incorporate and highlight opportunities for access, use and community involvement in the management in an effort to develop stewardship of green spaces, maximise sustainable use and foster the benefits that green spaces can bring for the health and wellbeing of the community, all of which would help achieve the policy objectives outlined in the TDBC Green Space Strategy.

### Access

An urban fringe development such as this should soften the lines between town and country, bringing wildlife into the development and allowing people to engage easily with the countryside. Although the development will permanently alter landscape character for those currently living in north Taunton and Staplegrove Village, the pedestrian and cycle routes that are included through the site and link to north Taunton will maintain links between existing communities and the countryside and encourage those living in the Staplegrove development to make more sustainable transport choices.

### A vision for a vibrant, wildlife-rich Taunton

Somerset Wildlife Trust is working across Taunton to bring people closer to the town's beautiful natural heritage through Routes to the River Tone project. We have a vision of a vibrant, wildlife-rich county town, shared with local communities and our partners, which we want to make a reality that lasts beyond the life of the current project. Just two years into three years of funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Routes to the River Tone is already igniting a spark in Taunton's residents, inspiring them to begin a journey of exploration, experiencing nature first hand with experienced and enthusiastic naturalists through events and activities right across the town.

Routes to the River Tone builds on the aspirations outlined in Taunton Deane's Core Strategy, which in recognition of the role the natural environment plays in attracting people, business and investment to the town, states "Developments will be well designed, taking cues from our distinctive character and enhancing our unique environment which plays such an important role in making the Borough of Taunton Deane so special"; supporting this are policies CP1 (Climate Change) and CP8 (Environment) which make provisions for coherent design and ecological enhancement through development. We are pleased to see that consideration has been given to these policies in regard to this planning application, although we did not feel that the same level of consideration had been given to the western section of this development.

By working with the local planning authority, developers and their consultants, we want to maximise opportunities to bring people and wildlife together in the built environment, creating spaces where wildlife and people can thrive together. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the local planning authority, developers and their consultants to discuss how we might be able to work together to realise our shared vision of showcasing the wonderful natural environment of Taunton and inspiring people to re-connect with the natural world around them.

*ENVIRONMENT AGENCY –  
(Initial comments of 6th June 2016)*

In the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) the Environment

Agency OBJECTS to the grant of planning permission on flood risk grounds. In particular, the submitted FRA fails to take the impacts of climate change into account based on the recently updated climate change allowances. As submitted the FRA, does not comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 9 of the Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework. The submitted FRA does not therefore provide a suitable basis for assessment to be made of the flood risks arising from the proposed development.

The proposal is for an urban extension, in view of the sensitivity of the development in respect of delivery and vulnerability of the proposed residential led use it is important that the development is safe in flood risk terms for its lifetime (100 years for residential). Given the sensitivity of the proposal, the Environment Agency considers that it is essential the FRA is revised and considers the impact of the updated climate change allowances on the proposal. Details of the allowances can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>.

To overcome our objection, the FRA should be revised to consider the impact of the recently revised climate change allowances (30%, 40% and 85%) on the proposed development. We would expect the applicant to assess the impact on the site for each scenario and propose adequate measures to address the impact of climate change. This is important in demonstrating the safety of the site against flood risk, and should influence the location of the proposed dwellings, finished floor levels and location of the surface water attenuation ponds.

Information addressing the above should be submitted directly to the LPA. We will provide bespoke comments within 21 days of formal re-consultation by the LPA. Any correspondence regarding this matter should be directed to the Wessex Sustainable Places Team at [nwx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nwx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk).

If you are minded to approve the application contrary to our objection, it is considered essential that you contact the Agency to discuss the implications prior to determination of the application. We have sent a copy of this letter to the applicant's agent for information.

*(Additional comments dated 5th October 2016)*

The Environment Agency has received revised modelling figures from the applicant's consultants referring to the above application. We can now WITHDRAW our earlier objection, subject to the inclusion of the following conditions within the Decision Notice:

**CONDITION:**

The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and addendum, and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA.

**REASON:**

To reduce the risk of flooding.

**NOTE:**

There must be no building or land raising within Flood Zone 3, and no building or landscaping within 8 m of the top of the bank.

**CONDITION:**

If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the LPA shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the LPA for, an amendment to the remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

**REASON:**

To protect controlled waters.

**CONDITION:**

No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for prevention of pollution during the construction phase has been approved by the LPA. The scheme should include details of the following:

1. Site security.
2. Fuel oil storage, bunding, delivery and use.
3. How both minor and major spillage will be dealt with.
4. Containment of silt/soil contaminated run-off.
5. Disposal of contaminated drainage, including water pumped from excavations.
6. Site induction for workforce highlighting pollution prevention and awareness.

Invitation for tenders for sub-contracted works must include a requirement for details of how the above will be implemented.

**REASON:**

To prevent pollution of the water environment.

**NOTE:**

Measures should be taken to prevent the runoff of any contaminated drainage during the construction phase.

The following informatives and recommendations should be included in the Decision Notice. This development may require a permit under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 from the Environment Agency for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within eight metres of the top of the bank of the Mill Lease Stream, designated a 'main river'. This was formerly called a Flood Defence Consent. Some activities are also now excluded or exempt. A permit is separate to and in addition to any planning permission granted. Further details and guidance are available on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>. The need for an Environmental Permit is over and above the need for planning permission. To discuss the scope of the controls please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506. Some activities are now excluded or exempt; please see the following link for further information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>.

It must be noted that any works in proximity of a watercourse other than a main river, may be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Lead Local Flood Authority/Internal Drainage Board.

There must be no interruption to the surface water and/or land drainage system of the surrounding land as a result of the operations on the site. Provisions must be made to ensure that all existing drainage systems continue to operate effectively.

The foul drainage should be kept separate from the clean surface and roof water,

and connected to the public sewerage system after conferring with the sewerage undertaker.

There shall be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage from the site into either groundwater or any surface waters, whether direct to watercourses, ponds or lakes, or via soakaways/ditches.

Any oil or chemical storage facilities should be sited in bunded areas. The capacity of the bund should be at least 10% greater than the capacity of the storage tank or, if more than one tank is involved, the capacity of the largest tank within the bunded area. Hydraulically inter-linked tanks should be regarded as a single tank. There should be no working connections outside the bunded area.

*(Further comments dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017).*

The Environment Agency has no comments to make, in addition to those contained in its letter dated 5 October 2016 regarding the proposal.

*SCC (LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY), FLOOD RISK MANAGER –  
(Original comments made on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016).*

The development indicates an increase in impermeable areas that will generate an increase in surface water runoff. This has the potential to increase flood risk to the adjacent properties or the highway if not adequately controlled.

The applicant has not provided any surface water drainage strategy for the development, although there is some attenuation basins shown on Drawing ref: C13128, Drainage Strategy, Preliminary 13128-SKC010, However this is not sufficient to approve the application at this time, furthermore any drainage strategy needs to take consideration the existing application recently submitted ref: 34/16/0007 and ensure that both strategies are combined and working in conjunction.

It should also be noted that discharge from the site must be held back to a maximum of 2l/s/ha. Due to the location of the site and the proposed increase in impermeable areas it will be necessary to provide these details.

The LLFA has no objection to the proposed development, as submitted, subject to the following drainage condition being applied.

CONDITION: No development shall be commenced until details of the surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles together with a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage strategy shall ensure that surface water runoff post development is attenuated on site and discharged at a rate of 2 l/s/ha or greenfield runoff rates, whichever rate is lower. Such works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

These details shall include: -

- Details of phasing (where appropriate) and information of maintenance of drainage systems during construction of this and any other subsequent phases.
- Information about the design storm period and intensity, discharge rates and volumes (both pre and post development), temporary storage facilities, means of

access for maintenance (6 metres minimum), the methods employed to delay and control surface water discharged from the site, and the measures taken to prevent flooding and pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters.

- Any works required off site to ensure adequate discharge of surface water without causing flooding or pollution (which should include refurbishment of existing culverts and headwalls or removal of unused culverts where relevant).
- Flood water exceedance routes both on and off site, note, no part of the site must be allowed to flood during any storm up to and including the 1 in 30 event, flooding during storm events in excess of this including the 1 in 100yr (plus 30% allowance for climate change) must be controlled within the designed exceedance routes demonstrated to prevent flooding or damage to properties.
- A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management company or maintenance by a Residents' Management Company and / or any other arrangements to secure the operation and maintenance to an approved standard and working condition throughout the lifetime of the development

REASON: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with paragraph 17 and sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015).

#### *WESSEX WATER –*

According to our records there are existing public apparatus which cross the site and will require easement and protection. The pipes must be accurately located on site and marked on deposited drawings. Apparatus include: Public foul sewer (diameter unknown) likely 3 metre easement 400mm and 700mm diameter water mains – 6 metre easements from any structure.

The site will be served by separate systems of drainage constructed to current adoptable standards please see Wessex Water's S104 adoption of new sewer guidance DEV011G for further guidance.

The applicant's drainage consultant has undertaken preliminary discussions with Wessex Water regarding the foul drainage strategy for development at Staplegrove. The points of connection for foul drainage as shown on the Hydrock Drawing "Drainage Strategy C13128" (Preliminary) are yet to be fully assessed or agreed. Capacity improvements are likely to be required to reduce the risk of downstream sewer flooding. In view of these circumstances please consider the use of the following planning condition should the application gain approval:

#### Foul Water - Planning Condition

The development shall not be commenced until a foul water drainage strategy is submitted and approved in writing by the local Planning Authority in consultation with Wessex Water acting as the sewerage undertaker

- a drainage scheme shall include appropriate arrangements for the agreed points of connection and the capacity improvements required to serve the proposed

development phasing;

- the drainage scheme shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and to a timetable agreed with the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that proper provision is made for sewerage of the site and that the development does not increase the risk of sewer flooding to downstream property.

The applicant has indicated the disposal of surface water discharge from site via SuDs arrangements to watercourse which will need the approval of the LLFA under flood risk measures. Elements of this system can be offered for adoption by Wessex Water; please refer to our SuDs policy available on our website.

Water supply modelling undertaken previously indicates that subject to application the development may connect to either the existing 700mm DI trunk main or the 400mm DI Taunton Eastern Ring Main.

*HISTORIC ENGLAND –*

*(Original comments received 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016).*

We do not wish to comment in detail, but offer the following general observations.

#### Historic England Advice

This application is in outline form with all matters reserved, except for access, for 915 residential units, a primary school, 1ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping, woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road.

The statutory focus for Historic England is the impact that the proposed development would have upon the setting of the Grade II\* assets that are within the area and the Staplegrave Conservation Area.

Having reviewed the proposals there are three specific assets which we feel have potential to be affected: Pyrland Hall (Grade II\*), Yards Farmhouse (Grade II\*) and Oakhill (Grade II). Pyrland Hall dates from circa 1760. It was clearly positioned to take in a landscape setting to the southwest. Yarde Farmhouse dates from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with alterations from the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of its setting it is not formally designed but does have a strong connection to the agricultural landscape southeast of it. Oakhill is centrally positioned and is directly within the development area.

Key to our consultation advice is the requirement of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in Section 66(1) for the local authority to “have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses”. Section 72 of the act refers to the Council’s need to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area in the exercise of their duties. When considering the current proposals, in line with Para 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the significance of the asset’s setting requires consideration. Para. 132 states that in considering the impact of proposed

development on significance great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. It goes on to say that clear and convincing justification is needed if there is loss or harm. When considering development that has the potential to affect setting Historic England's Advice Note 3, the Setting of Heritage Assets should be referred to.

We are conscious that this is an outline application with all matters reserved except for access. In this context we do not oppose the application - we are conscious of the heritage assessments undertaken to date and the attention that has been made to arrange the site to minimise impact. At full application stage a further review will be required, alongside detailed plans and where necessary photomontages. Ultimately the assessment at this later stage will need to follow the Historic England Guidance. Of the assets that have potential to be affected we are particularly interested to understand fully the impact upon the formal setting of Pyrland Hall, with its formal landscape. To date we have not had an opportunity to access Oakhill which would be surrounded by the development - access to better understand impact will be required.

### **Recommendation**

We would urge you to address the above issues, and recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again.

### *SOUTH-WEST HERITAGE -*

To respond to the quality and comprehensiveness of the Heritage Assessments and Heritage Conservation Strategy forming the basis of this application I have read the following documents:

Staplegrove Taunton Somerset Heritage Appraisal (Cotswold Archaeology, Sept. 2014 )  
ES 15 Environmental Statement Cultural Heritage  
Staplegrove East Taunton Somerset Heritage Setting Assessment  
Statement of Common Ground: TAU2 Staplegrove Historic Environment  
Staplegrove, Taunton, Somerset: Heritage Conservation Strategy (Cotswold Archaeology, Nov 2015a)  
Staplegrove (East), Taunton, Somerset: Heritage Settings Assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2015b)  
Staplegrove (West), Taunton, Somerset: Heritage Settings Assessment (Cotswold Archaeology, 2015c)  
Somerset HER|: relevant records  
HE The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment GPA 3

The reports refer to advice from Ross Simmonds, Principal Historic Planner Historic England South West and Simon Robertshaw, Inspector of Historic Buildings Historic England, which was integrated into the Statement of Common Ground and Heritage Strategy but I have not seen the correspondence for this. Similarly, ES15 para 15.43 details that Nigel Pratt has stated in an email of 4th Nov 2015 that he concurs with the findings of the Heritage surveys and supports the mitigation measures proposed.

The heritage assessments identify designated built Heritage Assets with an impact on their setting by the proposed development (after excluding assets that are not affected due to topography and existing screening) as Staplegrove Conservation Area, Yarde Farmhouse Grade II\*, Pyrland Hall Grade II\* and Okelands Grade II. The settings reports and Heritage Conservation Strategy take into account relevant guidance and policy including TDBC development Strategy.

The scope of the assessment does not include non-designated assets in the built environment. I visited the site on 27th of June to assess impact on designated assets and if and how any undesignated assets would be affected by the proposal.

The setting of unlisted historic buildings at Burlands is affected similarly as the neighbouring Yarde Farm and Smoky Farm and benefit from the mitigation measures for the adjacent listed buildings, such as protection of the skyline at Rag Hill and screening to maintain rural views in the immediate neighbourhood.

Undesignated historic buildings in the hamlet of Whitmore, Dairy House, Whitmore Barton and part of at Whitmore farm will be surrounded by the new development though buffered with strips of green amenity space to either side. Pyrland Lodge is to be screened with planting on the opposite side of the road along the edge of the development area. The impact on these assets is in line with the effects on listed buildings as discussed in the assessments.

There is a detailed discussion of relevant views which have been taken into account when formulating the mitigation measures and design response set out in the Heritage Conservation Strategy and detailed in the Statement of Common Ground to minimise the harm identified. These measures are to be delivered via Section 106 agreements planning conditions and parameter plans.

Subject to the mitigation measures described and further review of the design at application stage I concur with the assessment that no significant visual harm is caused to any designated or un-designated built heritage assets.

However, although the term “urban extension” is mentioned the assessment fails to highlight the unavoidable change to the “general character” (see page HE Setting guidance p.11) of the area the development will bring; from that of a rural to semi-rural setting of a satellite village to Taunton to a fully suburban environment.

Please note that the Statement of Common Ground details involvement of the TDBC Conservation Officer in the design of the houses of Area A.

#### *COMMUNITY LEISURE OFFICER -*

In accordance with Local Plan Policy C4, provision for play and active recreation should be made for the residents of these dwellings.

Every family sized 2 bed + dwelling should provide 20sqm of both equipped and non-equipped play space. The equipped play spaces should be centrally located and over looked by front facing dwellings to promote natural surveillance. The lay out of the equipped play spaces and the type of equipment within them should be agreed with TDBC Open Spaces. The Play Strategy submitted with application



proposes 5 x LEAP and 1 x NEAP. A development of this size should provide at least 3 X LEAP and 2 X NEAP.

Outdoor recreation and playing field provision of 45 sq metres per dwelling should be provided. The layout of the open spaces, playing pitches and planting to be agreed with TDBC Open Spaces.

915 dwellings will generate the need for a community hall consisting of a main hall, toilets, kitchen and activity room.

15.4 sq metres per dwelling of allotment provision should be made.

A coordinating overview of both this application and 34/16/0007 Staplegrove West as a whole project could be taken. Sports pitches for ease of future maintenance, access by users and changing facilities could be grouped together, as a sports hub. Allotment provision could be made as one large site between the 2 applications rather than smaller sites. The need for a community hall arises from both sites, this could be served by the provision of one hall with additional meeting and activity rooms rather than 2 smaller independent facilities.

*(OPEN SPACES MANAGER – TDBC).*

For a community of 1600 homes we would recommend the following:

Allotments – 2.464 Hectares

The trigger point for provision of on-site is 374 x dwellings. Each dwelling generates a need of 15.4 sqm per dwelling so  $15.4 \text{ sq m} \times 1600 = 24640 \text{ sqm}$  or 2.464 hectares of allotment land.

Equipped Public Playing Fields – 7.2 Hectares

Laid out and equipped formal sports but available to the general public at other times for informal recreation. The trigger point for on-site provision is 482 dwellings. Each dwelling generates a need of 45m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling so  $45 \times 1600 = 72000 \text{ m}^2$  or 7.2 hectares of equipped public playing fields. At this point we would not specify junior or senior pitches, just pitches. Any provision for schools within this development proposal do not count as part of TDBC's requirements.

In first instance allotment site(s) and playing pitches should be offered to the Parish Council, then the Borough Council and as a last resort a management company details of which to be submitted to the Borough Council for approval.

*SCC - RIGHTS OF WAY –*

Specific Comments.

In addition to public footpaths T 24/6 and T 24/15, this development will also impact on T 15/1 and T 15/6. It is not clear at this stage what the impact will be on these paths, thus further detail will be required to comment fully on this.

Generic Comments

Any proposed works must not encroach on to the width of the footpath.

Development, insofar as it affects the rights of way should not be started, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until the necessary (stopping up/diversion) Order has come into effect. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with. The health and safety of walkers must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of the footpath, but only to a standard suitable for pedestrians. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of the footpath resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.

In addition, if it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from SCC Rights of Way Group.

- A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
- New furniture being needed along a PROW.
- Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
- Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW.

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would

- make a PROW less convenient for continued public use (or)
- create a hazard to users of a PROW

then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided.

#### *DIVERSIONS ORDER OFFICER –*

By studying Drawing Number 1005.P.002 it is noted that the Public Footpaths T24/6, T24/15 and T24/17 may be affected by this proposal.

#### *LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL -*

TDBC are aware of the lack of capacity to accommodate any further numbers without delivery of an additional educational facility.

The site proposed in the indicative layout for the East application appears acceptable and without requiring significant engineering to develop although its location causes concern for delivery as the site appears inaccessible unless the infrastructure works are completed early.

However there are a number of issues that the Council request TDBC take into account that significantly affect deliverability.

#### *Timescales*

- To provide local education places for these homes, we would need the site and access to the site immediately (before any houses have been constructed). This would provide the Council with the best chance of school delivery by the time this development produces more places than the surrounding schools can cope with (already considered to be at capacity). Any triggers set above 0 houses will result in

a delay to delivery

- Assuming access and site a school construction timescale is at least 18 months.

#### Access

- Access to site identified appears to be through developer built roads. Access cannot be achieved through Whitmore Lane.
- The school can only commence construction when there is suitable access. We would need this prior to the construction of any houses.
- Access to the site ideally needs to be already established (adjoining existing highway) to enable early delivery of education provision. We therefore request an alternative site is identified that will enable delivery to coincide with need.

#### Site

- An alternative site closer to existing highway network would allow an earlier timetable for delivery
- Minimum site area 2.1 hectares (assuming a regular shape).

#### Other.

- Confirmation as to how TDBC might link the East and West applications (We need a school site regardless of which development starts first).

#### Summary

The current proposed site would provide us with a good level site. However the access causes the Council great concern in terms of deliverability and school/pupil access. More information is required to provide certainty but initial thoughts are that school might not be achievable until 2021 at the earliest. Assuming this development starts in 2017/18, we should anticipate potentially needing to transport children for 4 to 5 years outside of the Staplegrave area.

*(Further comments dated 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016).*

The current proposed school site appears to provide a level site, and is situated in a central location in relation to the overall development. However, we do have serious concerns in relation to the potential timing of the transfer of the land, the availability of access and infrastructure to the site for both construction traffic and subsequently access by members of the public/pupils following construction.

Based on our current experience of CIL and the triggers for land transfer/access road delivery, we expect that this school would not be available until 2022 at the earliest (depending on build out rates). Consequently, due to the lack of school places in the surrounding area we anticipate needing to transport children for 3 to 4 years outside of the Staplegrave area for their schooling needs.

To provide local education places (construction of new school) for these homes within the Staplegrave area from Sept 2019, we would need the following:

- Transfer of land by March 2018 (at the latest)
- Construction access together with service infrastructure to the site by May 2018 (at the latest)
- Fully serviced Public access to the site by July 2019 (at the latest).

This would provide the Council with the best chance to enable school place delivery

by the time this development produces more places than the surrounding schools can cope with (already considered to be at capacity).

We welcome the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue with TDBC and the applicants to enable an early school delivery to coincide with need.

*MINERALS AND WASTE PLANNING POLICY TEAM, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL -*

I write the following officer comments on behalf of the (minerals and waste) planning policy team at Somerset County Council (SCC) with regard to the above application, noting SCC's role as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Somerset (excluding Exmoor National Park). We appreciate the opportunity to comment.

**Minerals safeguarding**

We are pleased to note that a Mineral Assessment Report has been prepared as part of this application, having noted that the development is an area safeguarded by the adopted Somerset Minerals Plan for its minerals resources. The work done to establish the viability of extraction is welcome, and we note the conclusion of the applicant's assessment that:

"This study has demonstrated that the mapped deposit of the River Terrace Deposits on site, shown on the Somerset Minerals Plan as a Minerals Safeguarding Area does not contain an economically viable sand and/or gravel deposit. For this reason Policy SMP 9 does not apply for the site as an exemption is applicable on the basis that prior extraction is not practicable and/or viable and the merits of the development outweigh the safeguarding of the mineral."

**Waste prevention**

Current adopted policy is set by the Waste Core Strategy (adopted February 2013) and this forms part of the Development Plan. There are opportunities to minimise waste production at the design stage of any development; the bigger the project, the more important it becomes to have a strategic approach to construction, demolition and excavation waste management.

We are pleased to note that "a construction waste management scheme can also be considered at a more detailed stage" as referenced on page 74 of the Design & Access

Statement. To be clear, we would consider that such a waste management scheme is essential, not least as a matter of compliance with policy WCS1 in the adopted Waste Core Strategy.

In addition to local waste planning policy, national waste planning practice guidance highlights the value of significant developments including a waste audit (see Paragraph: 049 Reference ID: 28-049-20141016). Set in this context, we promote the use of Site Waste Management Plans (SWMPs), noting there are demonstrable benefits in terms of cost savings (from the efficient use of materials and less waste disposal) alongside the environmental benefits. There are various templates and tools available for developing SMWPs, including those available from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) website: [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk).

**Recycling and reuse**

Policy WCS2 of the adopted Somerset Waste Core Strategy encourages the

provision of adequate space and facilities to enable effective separation, temporary storage and collection of waste. Furthermore, national waste planning practice guidance supports the application of the waste hierarchy by non-waste planning authorities (Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 28-010-20141016); and this support is also made explicit in paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy for Waste. Set in this context, it is important that the applicant considers at the design stage how the developer can facilitate recycling and the collection of waste. Focusing on the residential development, reference should be made to the Developer Guidance available from the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Also we highlight that Policy WCS2 requires effective access for waste collection and recycling vehicles. Colleagues from our Transport and Development Group will be able to provide further comment on highway standards in their capacity as the Highway Authority.

#### *SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP –*

We are pleased to be able to support you in fulfilling your statutory obligations to provide adequate storage space for household waste and to provide adequate access for collection of waste from the property. Please refer to our document “SWP Design Requirements for Residential Properties”, which can be found by visiting [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) and clicking “Business Advice”. This document should hold the information you require. However if you need specific advice which is not answered in this document please contact Somerset waste Partnership at [enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk) and, resource permitting, we will try to help.

#### *SOMERSET CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP –*

SCCG has concerns regarding the impact of this proposed development on the local National Health Services and refer you to correspondence received by TDBC from Ian Longden, Primary Care Commissioning, NHS England Area Team (Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire). SCCG welcomes the opportunity for discussion.

#### *NHS ENGLAND SOUTH, SOUTH WEST TEAM & NHS SOMERSET CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP -*

NHS England South, South West Team welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed new developments in Taunton. The comments in this response should be used by the Planning Authority to relate to Infrastructure Requirements for NHS England to ensure access for residents of new residential developments to GP Primary Care services is secured.

The new homes in Taunton (Staplegrave) will generate a significant number of new residents who will all require access to Primary Care Services in the area including GP services. NHS General Practices are a publically funded Community Infrastructure. The majority of comments are based on statutory responsibilities to provide healthcare facilities for the population of Somerset, which sets out how it will ensure easier access for residents of this new residential development to GP Primary Care services.

It is understood the Environmental Statement issued by the developer cites there is sufficient capacity with Taunton practices, and thus concludes no support is needed to enhance the Primary Care infrastructure as a result of the development. This assumption is challenged with further information and analysis to assess and confirm that the current NHS funded services are sufficient only for the current population with no additional capacity available to cater for the proposed increase in population to be generated by this application.

This response seeks to set out the nature and scope of NHS Community Infrastructure local to the development; assess the capacity and sustainability of the current provision; and state the net impact of the development, outlining the proposed response to the development.

By its nature it is not feasible to submit detailed plans for any necessary infrastructure at this stage for every planning application. NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England have developed Strategic Estates and Services' Plans taking account of proposed new housing. Outline solutions have been proposed for this application and once it is confirmed the development is to proceed, then detailed plans will be developed and implemented. These plans look to provide an equitable service offer through the development of Strategic Sites to meet current demand and for population growth for Taunton.

The Staplegrave application will contribute the need for additional capacity. The proposed solution proposed as a result of new housing will be needed on a gradual basis as houses are built and sold. This infrastructure will necessitate costs and building for the total of the new population with "void" space built in and then utilised gradually during the life of the proposed development until completion.

#### NHS England commissioning responsibility

NHS England has a duty to commission local healthcare services to meet the expected needs of the population of Somerset including the demands of the additional population of the new developments.

The NHS structure within England changed on the 1 April 2013 with the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). This change principally created NHS Commissioning Board, known as NHS England, replacing the Primary Care Commissioning function previously undertaken by Somerset Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset).

At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset.

Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group is developing a Primary Care Estates Strategy. This strategy will inform NHS England's and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) responses to Infrastructure requirements e.g. on new communities and new housing developments within Somerset.

In the interim, NHS England South, South West Team and Somerset CCG has considered all current work, and has used this to inform the comments on the proposed new neighbourhoods in Taunton.

This sets out how access to GP Primary Care and Community services is ensured for residents of this new residential development in Taunton.

### Nature of General Practice

Primary Care services account for around 90% of the public's contact with the NHS and can significantly improve the health of the local population, identifying and managing chronic disease and illness, and reduce reliance on hospital care. Primary Care needs to sit at the heart of natural communities, supported by community and social care services.

NHS England's and Somerset CCG vision is to make an increasing percentage of care available close to people's homes and to deliver more services in primary care and community settings, whilst reducing unnecessary reliance on hospital care. This will support the delivery of productivity and efficiency savings in secondary care, but will also make additional demands on primary care providers in terms of both direct service provision and in playing a more active role in managing local resources (for example developing and regularly reviewing care plans to reduce the risk of vulnerable people being admitted to hospital for preventable illness).

The General Practice Forward View published in April 2016, sets out a plan to stabilise and transform general practice. General practice in 2020 will not look the same. It will be able to work at scale making best use of premises and new technologies. This is because larger practices have more capacity to provide increased services and the necessary infrastructure to ensure that quality standards are being met and that clinical staff receive appropriate support and development.

In general larger practices are better able to provide a wider range of health services and support the systematic tracking and improving of the quality of care for patients with conditions such as asthma, diabetes and coronary heart disease, and for those with the most complex care needs in the community. By developing bigger practices, we can provide a wider range of services to patients and provide extended access to services in the evening and at weekends. Bigger practices are better able to work with partners to pursue areas of joint practice.

The development of new primary care estate must facilitate improvements in the range and quality of services offered in primary care. In particular it should enable GPs and their teams to play an even greater role in primary and secondary prevention of ill health, and to maintain and further improve the quality of services.

### Healthcare facilities for new development

NHS General Practices are a publically funded Community Infrastructure. Although General Practices operate as individual businesses, they are contracted to the NHS and publically funded for the delivery of Primary Care Services. They are able to seek borrowing to fund new developments or extensions to their existing premises, and develop a business case to seek the revenue funding from NHS England towards the costs of their borrowing. NHS England and practices with an NHS contract adhere to NHS (General Medical Services – Premises Costs) Directions 2013 when they apply for and receive NHS funding for their premises.

Any extension or new development as a result of new housing will be needed on a gradual basis as houses are built and sold. This infrastructure will necessitate additional "void" space built and then utilised gradually during the life of the

proposed development until completion.

Early NHS policy set a straightforward geographical criterion such that a GP is “within walking distance for mothers with prams”. The NHS still recommends that patients register with their local GP. New residents are able to choose which GP practice to register with. The NHS uses pragmatic guidance that residents having access to a GP within 15 minute walk or public transport is an appropriate measure of accessibility. At this stage of the development it is not possible to determine travel times for public transport or walking and NHS England South, South West would support the requirement for public transport and cycling/walking routes to be provided within the development area to provide that accessibility.

The Planning Authority has indicated that 1500 new houses in Staplegrove would result in 3,600 new residents in Staplegrove Taunton. This equates to approximately an additional 2.12 GPs to provide sufficient capacity for the new residents.

#### Capacity in neighbouring general practices

There are several practices in the area with 3 practices within 2km of the site. However, based on an analysis of the number of GPs at these practices and space available there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers of new patients expected.

For the purposes of overall planning, the policy was to define capacity in general practice as fewer than 1,700 patients per GP. This was the standard adopted by NHS Somerset in considering new developments, the equivalent of one extra GP for each additional 1,700 new residents. This is above the national average number of patients per practitioner which has fallen from 1,795 in 2000 to 1,567 in 2010. Therefore fewer GPs were commissioned in NHS Somerset than average areas. In the absence of national policy, NHS England, South, South West has used these guidelines to inform our recommendations for this document.

Patients can register with a GP practice of their choice, as long as they live within its catchment area and it is accepting new patients. GP practices now agree their practice boundaries with NHS England. Practices can apply to NHS England if they have insufficient capacity to care for further patients to close their patient list. Currently there are no practices in Somerset with a closed patient list.

An analysis of the capacity of neighbouring practices to determine the typical costs and sizes of primary healthcare facilities could incorporate the population projections for the area.

The Environment Statement published in March 2016 for Staplegrove East, Taunton sets out the GP Surgery Capacity. The table supplied shows the current provision is below the current demand:

To assess the infrastructure requirements a benchmarking exercise was undertaken to determine typical costs and sizes of primary healthcare facilities so a projection of future demands and need could be made. The current premises are the main limitation to accepting the additional new residents. They are currently struggling for the space needed to provide services to meet the NHS General Practice Forward View. The addition of the new residents in Taunton and specifically at Staple Grove will require additional capacity. The results of assessment indicate there is no local



capacity that is accessible.

For the purposes of assessing whether there is adequate capacity, NHS England South, South West measures the GIA size of the premises against the Premises Guidance GIA rather than the number of GPs per patient.

NHS England South, South West recommends there is a requirement for creating this additional space within a Business case to redevelop one or more of the existing surgeries to include the space needed for the proposed the new population of 19,200 residents in Taunton. This is because the existing surgeries do not have sufficient capacity to be extended. NHS England and Somerset CCG are preparing a Local Estates Strategy, which will address the proposed population increases in Taunton and propose the preferred option to meet the need.

#### Early provision of healthcare facilities

NHS England South, South-West Team would strongly endorse the need for healthcare facilities to be provided at the outset of the construction phase because it is important that there are healthcare facilities available before residents occupy their houses.

Given there is no capacity in neighbouring practices outlined earlier, NHS England would be unable to fulfil its statutory duties without further interim provision of local healthcare services during the development process.

NHS England would therefore support the potential for temporary provision and co-location in appropriate locations until the completion of the final facilities – provided that this was at no additional cost to NHS England and satisfied relevant CQC Regulations and appropriate standards for GP Practice premises.

NHS England believes that additional GP provision should be available for the new residents of Staplegrove Taunton at the outset of development. This would allow for incremental increase in services available in good time for when they will be needed. This would also allow sufficient time to plan and develop the permanent facility required on the completion of the proposed new neighbourhoods at Taunton.

#### Pharmaceutical services

The Local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, 2011 (PNA) provides an overview of pharmaceutical services provision. This document identified new housing developments with planning permission within Somerset. When the PNA was approved there were no gaps identified within current provision, and the national contract with each existing community pharmacy does not have a ceiling to contractor activity. Therefore the current level of contractors is adequate to meet the needs of the current population. A pharmaceutical services provider can apply for a new pharmacy contract when a gap is identified within the PNA.

Access to pharmaceutical services is anticipated to be available in (or adjacent to) areas where people access routine healthcare (GP surgeries) and/or major retail areas. These are considerations in planning access to pharmaceutical services for each new community development, in addition to access to existing services.

#### Additional Pharmaceutical Services

Although there are adequate pharmaceutical services to meet the needs of the new populations, the pharmaceutical provision from nearby pharmacies may not be

readily accessible to the new population. Nearby pharmacies are sited adjacent to and/or near other local primary care centres or in major retail areas, and they may require excessive travel.

Thus, securing accessible pharmaceutical services within the new community may require the provision of pharmaceutical premises within the Taunton New Neighbourhoods.

NHS England South, South West would, therefore support the provision of accommodation within the retail centre or co-located with the GP practice(s) for pharmaceutical services should be planned.

In line with the commissioning guidance under which NHS England operates, Somerset Council will carry out full reviews of the PNA every three years. Any 'gaps' in pharmaceutical service provision for the new residents of Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods which are identified and published within the PNA will allow the consideration of a new pharmacy contract within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods.

#### Dental services

Since 2006, patients are not registered with dentists and a dentist is only responsible for a patient's care whilst they are in a course of treatment. Although many practices do have their 'regular' patients, the commissioning of dental services differs somewhat from that of general practice.

#### Additional Dental Services

Dental needs are calculated on Units of Dental Activity, which relate to calculating the amount of dental time needed to provide a range of treatments eg an examination = 1 unit and a complex treatment conducted over a number of weeks might equal eg 12 units of activity or standard appointment slots. The usual planning assumption is 1 dentist per 2,400 patients and so the Staplegrove Taunton new neighbourhood would equate to approximately an additional 1.5 dentists.

Staplegrove - would require about 1.5 dentists to provide care for the new population.

The majority of the General Dental Services contracts were within the range of 96%-100% contractual achievement. The practices in the immediate area may not have capacity for growth. Under the terms of the dental commissioning guidance NHS England would have to carry out a tender process before awarding any new General Dental Services contract within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhood or increasing any existing contract.

#### Optometry services

As with dental services above, patients are not registered with an optometrist and an optometrist is only responsible for a patient's care in respect of assessing a patient's vision and eye health, issuing optical prescriptions and provision of optical vouchers for appliances such as spectacles and contact lenses. However, as with dental services, many optometrists do have their 'regular' patients.

NHS England has a responsibility to arrange for essential primary ophthalmic services i.e. NHS sight tests for those who are eligible. Furthermore, any suitable optometry provider is able to apply for a contract to provide NHS sight tests and

there are no restrictions on the number of contracts that may be awarded or the number of sight tests they may carry out. The current national contract with each existing optometry provider does not have a ceiling to contractor activity.

#### Additional Optometry Services

Although there may be adequate optometry services to meet the needs of the new population in the town centre, the optometry provision from nearby optometrists may not be readily accessible to the new population. Nearby optometrists are sited adjacent to and/or near other local primary care centres or in major retail areas, and they may require excessive travel.

Thus, securing accessible optometry services within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods may require the provision of optometry premises within the Neighbourhood Centre to improve accessibility to these services.

NHS England anticipates some optometrists may apply for a new contract(s) in these two developments as all current premises are located around the Town Centre of Taunton. Accommodation should be made available within the neighbourhood centre or within the GP practice(s) for optometry services.

#### Outline of Healthcare Infrastructure Needs

The NHS England South, South-West Team and Somerset CCG requests contributions to enable the construction of extension space for 18.75% (1500 / 8000 dwellings) of 1083sqm facility for General Practice, and 1.5 dentists with retail space available for optometrist and pharmacy outlets.

- GP Services: contribution of an extension at the nearest surgery, Lyngford Park. The practice has developed plans for additional space at the surgery costed at £ 669,600 incl VAT and fees.
- a 1.5 dentist surgery/extension of 60m<sup>2</sup> of space (GIA) with a budget cost of £ 144,000 (excl. VAT) at £2400/m<sup>2</sup> = £172,800.

This funding will be required at the outset of the development to ensure adequate capacity can be developed and planned to a total of £842,400 (incl VAT) excluding land.

#### *DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL -*

The Director of Public Health sees this proposed development as providing an opportunity to enable health and well-being, by maximising opportunities for physical activity, through enabling active travel choices for work, school and leisure. This will not only promote individual health and well-being, but reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

As this is only an outline application, we are necessarily constrained to comment on the matters under consideration now, but would encourage the developers to engage with the Public Health team at County Hall should the application be approved, as there will be many aspects of the detailed applications which should be informed by consideration of public health.

The main issues of concern to public health with this proposed development is the transport assessments and the implications for travel choices to and from the development to trip generators elsewhere in the town. There is a presumption that modal split of transport from this new development will be replicated from patterns elsewhere in the town for journeys to work, school etc, and only subsequently be reduced. This is not in accordance with national and local planning guidance which requires sustainable travel modes to be prioritised, nor with NICE Public Health guidance, endorsed by DfT, which also advises that walking and cycling should be prioritised (“Ensure the physical environment encourages people to be physically active. Implement changes where necessary. This includes prioritising the needs of pedestrians and cyclists over motorists when developing or redeveloping highways.”). The Somerset County Council (SCC) Active Travel Strategy, Cycling Strategy and Walking Strategy set out local priorities.

### Pedestrian and cycling environments

The pedestrian and cycle audit claims that Greenway Road is suitable for cycling, but acknowledges other aspects of several routes are intimidating. Use of the Cycling Environment Assessment Tool on the routes “audited” by the developer would result in scores of 0 out of 5. Some parts of the off road routes audited are not identified as substandard, which again use of the CEAT would have established. The claim that there are no recognised standards on which to base an audit is demonstrably incorrect. Both the London Cycle Design Standards and the Welsh Active Travel guidance include Level of Service tools for cycling, and the latter also for walking. The NMU (Appendix C-1) is hopeless in its almost total disregard of cyclists. The NMU fails to recognise significant deficiencies in the walking, but especially, the cycling environment. I would suggest that the auditor walked but did not cycle these routes.

It is now well established that planning for cycling should be based on what current non-cyclists who are potential cyclists would accept, not experienced road cyclists. Conversely, high quality cycling infrastructure is well liked and accepted by current cyclists, while facilitating new people to cycle of all age ranges and abilities.

The transport infrastructure from the development to Taunton railway station is inadequate for cycling, meaning that very few new residents would be willing to consider cycling to the station or on to other parts of the town. While cycling and walking infrastructure within the development could be of a good standard (to which I will return), without much improved infrastructure on the routes into the station and town centre, a useable network will not exist. It is vital that residents are enabled to choose to cycle if motor vehicle use is to be minimised, as walking to most trip generators in the town will not be practicable from this development.

Corkscrew Lane/Manor Road is currently a rat run between the A358 and North Taunton. Walking and cycling on this route, especially at peak periods, is hazardous and intimidating. Again this route would score 0/5 using the CEAT. The proposed spine road will provide an alternative west-east route. Arguably, the opening of the NIDR likewise will reduce congestion on Greenway Road removing justification for using Corkscrew Lane as a through route. We would advocate filtering Corkscrew Lane at Whitmore Lane to remove through motor traffic, while retaining through status for all other modes, when one or both these roads are open. This would provide a quiet east-west route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders as an alternative to Greenway Road and the Spine Road, with good connections to the lanes to the north for recreation. It would also protect Staplegrove village from

through traffic, while retaining full access for residents and businesses.

### Kingston Road Gyratory

The transport assessment acknowledges that this junction is already over capacity at peak hours. The assessment uses IEA Guidelines as a standard against which to judge the impact of forecast traffic levels arising from planned developments. Anything below 30% is considered negligible and below 60% as minor. As you will be aware traffic congestion is a non-linear phenomenon. As a road or junction approaches nominal capacity flow is impeded, and thus quite minor increases in vehicle numbers over and above these levels lead to rapidly worse congestion. Thus where a junction is already over capacity, adding even a few percent additional vehicles into that junction is likely to have a major detrimental impact on traffic flow and congestion at peak times, not the negligible impact claimed. Basing claimed impacts on change in traffic flow alone without reference to current capacity is not likely to reflect realworld conditions.

While the new NIDR road may offer some relief to congestion on this junction in the short term, the inevitable effects of induced demand mean that any such effect is likely only to be temporary without effective measures to minimise car and van traffic from the new development in peak hours.

### The Spine Road

The design of the spine road gives cause for concern with regard to its usability by cyclists. Shared use footways are at the very bottom of the list of acceptable ways to provide for cyclists, and placing a two-way shared use path on one side of the road limits its usability with limited crossing points. The suggestion from Highways to have the path switch sides at frontages would make the cycletrack unattractive to many cyclists as it would disrupt momentum. To propose such infrastructure on a greenfield site is unacceptable. We would refer the developer to [www.makingspaceforcycling.org/](http://www.makingspaceforcycling.org/) for best practice in this area and encourage adoption of these principles throughout the development. It should be noted that if high quality cycling infrastructure is provided, including at junctions, very few cyclists would be inclined to ride on the spine road itself.

If a path is installed which requires cyclists to switch sides, give way at side roads and driveways, and otherwise disrupt direct journeys, many cyclists are likely to choose to use the carriageway instead. This in itself is likely to lead to annoyance to drivers who will complain that cyclists are not using the “perfectly good” cycletrack. This can be seen on the Silk Mills Road where provision was made on one side of the road only, requiring multiple signalled crossing stages at Bindon Road and Bishop’s Hull for southbound cyclists. As a result many stay on road or cycle illegally on the footway on the eastern side, as it is far quicker to do so than negotiate the signalled crossings. This design error should not be repeated. The comments submitted by Sustrans regarding the spine road in response to application 34/16/0007 have great merit, and in particular the suggestions regarding hybrid tracks and more consideration to junction design.

Furthermore, the proposed carriageway width of 6.75m, implies lane widths of 3.37m. The London Cycling Design Standards state:

*“3.4.11 The golden rule is to avoid situations where motorised vehicles and cyclists are expected to move together through a width between 3.2m and 3.9m. Comfortable overtaking is possible above 3.9m. Below 3.2m it is clear to all parties that overtaking cannot be done safely. Between those widths, however, lies an area*

*of uncertainty where road users might estimate they could overtake each other but where the clearance they would be able to give is inadequate, putting the more vulnerable road user at risk. This includes the typical lane width adopted in much UK practice of 3.65m.*

*Use of this lane width should be avoided.*

*3.4.12 Where there is no cycle lane, the nearside lane width should therefore either be below 3.2m or at least 3.9m. Where there is a lane, the combined width of the cycle lane and adjacent (nearside) traffic lane should not be between 3.2m and 3.9m.”*

If the spine road itself is to be used by cyclists then the carriageway width should be such as to avoid the hazardous width set out in the LCDS. As stated previously if high quality cycletracks are installed, for example hybrid tracks on either side of the carriageway with good junction treatments, then cyclists of all abilities will be inclined to use those facilities.

The spine road cycletrack connections to the A358 may also present problems. The design shows multi-stage light controlled crossings, which may lead to significant delay for cyclists.

Best practice is for cyclists to have single stage crossings, or again many will choose to stay on carriageway to avoid excessive delay through the junctions. Cycling infrastructure is often not used because it is very substandard. Any designs should be subjected to the CEAT process (or preferably a more rigorous tool such as TfL CLoS) to make sure they achieve at least 4/5.

Best continental practice would enable cyclists and walkers to choose more direct routes than are available to drivers. Closing Corkscrew Lane to through motor traffic, and upgrading the connecting routes into Taunton including the railway station would make these modes more attractive than would otherwise be the case.

The DAS part 15 suggests junction radii of 10m on the spine road and 5m on residential roads. These are quite large radii not in keeping with best practice for vulnerable road users. The LCDS (para 5.1.4) suggests the following:

*“Designers should start from the assumption that corner radii should be minimised to benefit vulnerable road users, and then test whether this raises any issues. Junction design and the size of corner radii need to support calming and speed reduction measures. Indicative ranges of corner radii to support speed limits on the street in question are:*

- 0-3 metres for 20mph speed limit*
- 2-6 metres for 30mph*
- 3-10 metres for more than 30mph”*

The DAS also suggests that services along the spine road will be placed in the north footway, currently intended to be shared use. Best practice is NOT to place services under a cycletrack, as cyclists require smooth surfaces, which are likely to be compromised by inspection covers etc, as well as the inevitable substandard reinstatements following repair works. Any services should therefore be placed in the footway, not the cycletrack, regardless of whether the finally approved cycletrack is shared use or hybrid or some other form.

### Silk Mills Junction

The indicative layout between Corkscrew Lane and Silk Mills is of concern. The road

at this point is proposed to be widened to six lanes width, which will fundamentally alter the character of the area and provide an even more hostile feel than at present for pedestrians and cyclists. The provisions of Manual for Streets 2 should be informing design of this road, and in particular the advisability of left slip lanes and right turn lanes on this scale, for minor roads where turning movements will be minimal.

Provision for cyclists, without introducing multi-stage crossings, is needed to connect the Spine Road cycletracks to the tracks at Silk Mills.

### Schools

There is no real consideration of travel to secondary school. The nearest school is Taunton Academy, but the road route along Hope Corner Lane narrows to single vehicle width. Is there scope to provide a direct walking and cycling route from the Staplegrove East development site into the Academy and leisure centre site (one of the maps in the DAS hints at this)? If so, this should be pursued as it would then be the natural choice for children and residents of the East development for journeys to school. If not, then consideration should be given to filtering out motor vehicles from the narrow section of Hope Corner Lane. This would make walking and cycling to that site from the new development much more direct than driving. This type of measure is important in encouraging more sustainable and healthier modes of travel over driving, which would benefit public health.

The travel plan should seek to ensure a substantially higher proportion of school trips by modes other than private car than is currently proposed. Assuming that 40% of trips to the new primary school will be by car when the great majority of pupils will live within easy walking and cycling distance, and planning for that eventuality, is not conducive to child health. The provision of a drop off facility at the school site is also likely to encourage driving to school. Any such facility should not be for general use eg for physically disabled children only. The submission also suggests only having one main entrance to the school site. It is important that children can access the site safely on foot and cycle, and that there are sufficient entrances to ensure that routes to school are not far from desire lines.

### Travel Plan Modal Split targets

The document claims that the modal split targets aim to achieve the Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) aim of no more than 50% of trips by private car. However, the table separates out single occupancy car trips from those with passengers, and the modal split target is only for the former, and furthermore only achieves this target after 5 years. The target in the plan for private car travel is over 65%, well in excess of TDBC requirements.

An ambitious travel plan would be seeking to ensure that the 50% maximum target applies to all car trips, and from very early in development. The opportunity to shift travel behaviours occurs at major life changes such as moving house, or starting a new job or school. There should be no assumption that people moving into this development will continue their previous travel behaviours. Instead, personalised travel planning should be offered prior to occupation, thus maximising the likelihood that travel choices made at first occupation are likely to become permanent. It is therefore important that the connecting routes off site are upgraded prior to first occupation, or at least very early in the development, to facilitate sustainable travel modes being adopted from first occupation.

### Car Parking and Car Sharing

As part of the travel plan we suggest that incentivising alternatives to car travel could be strengthened by making multiple household car ownership less attractive. Cars are typically parked for 96% of the time. Providing parking spaces for cars is not a particularly productive use of valuable land, and clearly involves significant cost. In residential developments, parking is usually perceived as free, and consequently there is no disincentive to own and park multiple vehicles. We would suggest that the travel plan should include a requirement to make explicit the costs of parking provision by charging for it. Specifically, for parking within the curtilage, garaging and drive space should be offered as an option, just as other options are offered in new house developments, with the price explicitly stated, and indeed alternative options included eg extra rooms instead of garaging. Parking elsewhere on the development for residents, could be subject to annual chargeable permits, with permit costs rising significantly for multiple cars. The developers should also consider working with a commercial car share operator to minimise the need for households to have multiple cars. Income from permits could be used to invest in alternative travel modes such as public transport and cycling to further increase modal share for these socially and environmentally beneficial modes.

### Conclusions

Unless this whole development is implemented on the basis of travel planning which is much more ambitious in terms of modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport, on and off the development site, it is likely that this will become a new car-dependent suburb of the town, with consequential impacts on public health arising from inadequate everyday physical activity in the population.

All car traffic from this development will funnel into the existing highway network. Minimising the scale of that traffic by prioritising all other modes will be essential to avoid worsening congestion at peak periods.

The proposed cycling infrastructure does not meet best modern standards, and there are no specific proposals to address substandard connections off site to enable new residents to be and feel safe in undertaking utility cycling trips.

The proposals for both west and east Staplegrove urban extensions as currently submitted will, in our view, fail to achieve the sort of modal splits needed to avoid detrimental impacts on public health.



## Representations Received

At the time of the preparation of this report there have been 288 separate representations received from members of the public and other interested third parties, concerning the outline planning application for Staplegrove East (34/16/0014), up to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Many of these are separate responses from the same source. Many also wrote in combining further comments on the concurrent application for Staplegrove West. 268 of these representations were objecting to the proposed development, there are 11 letters of support, 4 making entirely neutral comments and 4 specifying that they had no comments to make.

Of those objecting, a significant number of responses (200 representations) made reference to highways concerns, traffic impact and/or the need for sustainable transportation. Of particular concern was the existing problems of congestion and 'rat running', and the perception that this proposal would make this worse. There was a lot of concern with the use of Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane as part of this proposal, particularly the proposed drop down link onto it in order to service some of the proposed housing. Reference is widely made to the need to have the link road completed either before development occurs or at a very early stage. Many comments also referenced the likelihood of commuting for jobs to other parts of the region via the M5. The need for good cycling and pedestrian links to promote sustainable travel was also widely mentioned.

About a fifth (20%) of those who objected (42) made reference to a lack of infrastructure and local services to support this number of new homes. In some cases the importance of infrastructure being delivered ahead of the proposed development was emphasised, particularly the proposed primary school, health services and the spine road.

Of the representations received, 37 made specific reference to existing and potential flooding problems in the local area and sought reassurances that the new development would not increase the risk of flooding. Inadequate existing drainage was often cited as the reason behind existing difficulties.

The perceived lack of employment opportunities in the wider Taunton area was also a concern to many respondents. 35 made reference to a lack of employment opportunities in Taunton for the new households being created and that this would lead to commuting.

Also of note is that 34 objectors made reference to the adverse impact on the landscape at Staplegrove and beyond the existing urban fringe and/or the impact of the proposal upon the AONB; and 13 referenced the loss of prime agricultural land and impact on farming activity.

Themes and specific comments raised by those objecting include: -

### 1. Principle of development

- This application must be considered alongside the proposals for Staplegrove West.
- This must be seen as one development not two, otherwise there is a risk that the more profitable areas will get completed first with the other areas left

unfinished or not even started.

- Greenfield sites should not be used for development.
- Staplegrove does not need any more houses.
- There is no justification for a housing development of this size.
- There has been an inadequate investigation into the level of need for these homes, the affordability of them, the infra-structure requirements for them to be successful, the upheaval caused by building on such a large scale, and the impact on the AONB of such an extended sprawl.
- Current data shows that the Core Strategy predictions on the need for housing related to employment opportunities are hopelessly out of date and there are sound reasons for deferment on the grounds of prematurity until Taunton's needs can be re-assessed.
- The Council's Monitoring Report uses labour supply rather than labour demand. An increase in housing will boost labour supply figures, thus giving the false impression that all is well with the Core Strategy employment prediction.
- It needs someone with backbone from the Council to stand up to central government and tell them that Taunton does not have the necessary infrastructure to support this colossal building program.
- This Government clearly stated that house building should only take place where there was a proven need for it and not on greenfield sites. There is no proven need in Taunton and won't be for some years
- It will result in urban sprawl in a semi-rural location.
- The Staplegrove area is expensive to develop because of the need to put the power cables underground and provide a spine road, so this means the developer needs to fit as many properties as possible into the site to make it viable.
- The Core Strategy so urgently requires refreshing that it has ceased to be a sound document under which to operate.
- The SADMP, rather than assessing the viability and logic of these sites, is absorbed in considering the matter of due process.
- The number of proposed houses in the application is confusing as the initial total number of houses for both West and East was 500 homes. This application for some 915 dwellings with the west having 713 contravenes the Core Strategy which approved between 500 and 1500 houses.
- It is unwise to commit to further development on this scale until a full review has taken place.
- Fear that having obtained planning permission for 1,628 houses, they will build just some of these houses and then stop, in order to keep house prices up and not have to include all the promised infrastructure.
- This outline planning application is for the building of a new town surrounding and strangling Staplegrove village.
- There is no transport plan for Taunton.
- This site does not meet the criteria of being located on a main road into Taunton. The Kingston Road is not even a "B" road.
- The most recent Strategic Market Housing Assessment shows the required need for new build to be 500 not
- 1000 houses per annum. So there has been a 100% over provision. There is

therefore no requirement for 1600 houses in Staplegrove.

- The data used to determine the number of houses required in this area which was based on employment figures is out-dated and should be reviewed in the light of the current economic climate. A review of the Core Strategy is therefore imperative prior to this application being approved.
- This is a major development and should be an exemplar for other developments in the County.
- The number of houses designated for this site together with a lack of infrastructure makes policy TAU2 unfit for purpose.
- A development of this complexity should be undertaken in a more appropriate geographic area near a road network that can accommodate the increased levels of traffic generated.
- The best site for new houses is east of the M5 towards Henlade. This would save all this congestion trying to get through Taunton.
- It would be better to consider a completely new village approach similar to what now exists at Cotford St.Luke.
- Brownfield sites for smaller developments would be far more suitable.
- There are numerous vacant properties that should be brought into use before a development of this size should be considered.
- The former market site (Firepool) is an eyesore and far more suitable for this kind of development.
- This is not a sustainable development.
- This whole project shows many indicators of not being viable and should be abandoned.
- The development area lies further north than shown during the public consultations. This is not good governance.
- It is imperative that TDBC determine a clear limit to future development and that no infrastructure that would facilitate such future development should be permitted. Any further development northwards would irreparably compromise Nailsbourne and Kingston St Mary and the AONB itself.
- The SADMP should be permanently quashed.
- This application should be deferred on grounds on prematurity.
- It would appear that the spine road will be built in such a way to potentially open up land northeast of the site for further development.

## **2. Infrastructure**

- No development of this scale should be accepted without the landowners taking full financial responsibility for improving the total infrastructure needed to support such a large investment.
- The criteria for garden town status includes that that new communities are required to be sustainable. Without sufficient adequate infrastructure off site provided in advance of development the proposed North Taunton Development does not accord with this particular criterion.
- It is indefensible to allow any developer to exceed the allocation of houses for Taunton at this time unless the required infrastructure is completed before construction of any new building.

- This application is premature and the land should be retained for release for new housing in future years as the necessary infrastructure such as jobs, sustainable transport and schools are in place.
- Overall number of new houses to be constructed for the whole urban extension should not be more than the 500 to 1500 range stipulated in the Council's published Core Strategy.
- It was never envisaged that this number of houses would be built and it will totally overwhelm the existing community.
- Support services will be overwhelmed as there are inadequate services on the North Side of town already.
- Leisure facilities in Taunton are inadequate. This will result in social unrest and antisocial behaviour.
- There is a current lack of play space.
- Who will manage the open spaces?
- Taunton does not have sufficient infrastructure to cater for the number of new inhabitants envisaged.
- Who will be paying for the pylons to be moved as it will cost millions?
- The huge cost of undergrounding the electricity pylons and cables must not be a burden on the taxpayer.
- The enormous cost of undergrounding the power lines must make the scheme unviable.
- No school available on the proposed development and all schools in the area are full up.
- A school will be needed before any houses are built.
- The County will not be able to afford a new school.
- No provision for secondary schooling.
- There is no guarantee a new school and/or health centre will be built.
- Musgrove Park hospital will not cope with the new numbers of people.
- New residents will have problems finding a surgery and there are insufficient doctors to staff any new surgery.
- No mention of increasing services to Staplegrove – a village which is to grow.
- There is insufficient green space allowed for within this plan.
- Do not allow the green wedge to be reduced by encroachment into it e.g. by roads.
- The Council needs to ensure the green wedge is maintained as originally envisaged in the SADMP.
- It is vital that the Council holds firm to its original view on the size of the green wedge given the importance attached to green spaces in the Garden Towns bidding document.
- Garden Towns have always made the first priority to be infrastructure. The current proposals do not fit this.
- Will Wessex Water be able to maintain supplies and water pressure during a prolonged dry summer?
- If TDBC is really short of money why not put up the Council Tax instead and correct the infrastructure first?
- The allotments should be held in trust for future generations.

### **3. Traffic congestion, impact on local road network and transport related issues.**

- Concerns regarding general increase in traffic in the area.
- The current SCC transport policies are based on 2008 traffic figures and pre-date the change in government approach and so may be based on what are now obsolete documents and figures.
- The applicant and the council must prove the robustness of earlier traffic surveys.
- The development is completely the wrong side of Taunton to access any of the major routes out of town.
- The proposals will lead to congestion in the town centre.
- Most occupants will drive to M5 to seek and get to work. This will result in unsustainable movement patterns
- The current junction 25 and link roads will not cope during peak hours.
- TDBC's Core Strategy (6.33) talks of new urban extensions being built in existing transport corridors. Here is an anomaly, because there is no such infrastructure in Staplegrove.
- Traffic congestion in the area is currently at unsustainable levels on all roads in the area, but particularly on Manor Road, Corkscrew Lane and Kingston Road.
- The passage of heavy agricultural equipment along Manor Road already causes problems.
- Additional traffic, particularly construction traffic, along Manor Road would cause regular immovable blockages.
- Given the narrowness of Manor Road, the lack of footpaths, its hairpin bends and existing volume of traffic, it is inconceivable that a new junction for construction traffic would be safe.
- The Council has already given an undertaking not to support any access onto Corkscrew Lane.
- A drop down road onto Corkscrew Lane would not be necessary if the applicants adhered to the adopted SADMP principle of building starting in the west, only commencing in the east upon completion of the spine road. To ignore this is in direct conflict with Policy TAU2 and should not be permitted.
- The East end promoters have ignored the local knowledge and wishes of the residents, in respect of Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane not being able to safely take more traffic.
- It is unacceptable to have 155 houses accessing Corkscrew Lane opposite Clifford Avenue.
- Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane are already dangerous rat-runs totally unsuitable for anything other than local traffic.
- More traffic will use Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road which has narrow stretches without pavements and so would be a danger to cyclists and pedestrians and would increase noise and air pollution.
- Corkscrew lane is inappropriate for construction traffic.
- The details and timeframe for delivery of making Corkscrew Lane an access for local traffic only should be part of this proposal and not a separate study.
- Make Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane a no-through Road and for residents

only.

- Manor Rd/Corkscrew lane is not safe as a cycling or pedestrian route.
- Para. 2.2.19 of the SADMP states that “As a result of the SAC and traffic generation issues, any development would need to commence at the western end...and ...development at the eastern end would be subject to completion of the proposed distributor road.” This policy decision must be adhered to.
- Traffic on the existing road network is often at a standstill during summer months. This will make it worse.
- Adverse impact of extra traffic on Kingston Road.
- The funds that the Council will receive from Central Government for each new house will not go anywhere near resolving the traffic problem. Better surely to forego the incentive.
- North Taunton needs a new ring road.
- There is no indication on the masterplan of how the spine road will achieve TDBC’s aim of a future northern orbital route.
- The spine road must extend eastwards beyond Kingston Road to become a ring road around Taunton at the outset of the development. We need a north circular route to take through traffic.
- The position of this roundabout on Kingston Road will be influenced by the proposed NODR and necessitate that the roundabout will move further northwards. To lose that opportunity now will relegate north Taunton to the disaster that exists south of the A38.
- Need speed humps and traffic lights along Kingston Road to slow down traffic.
- Use of Whitmore Road as a ‘rat-run’ whilst works are taking place.
- Traffic should be restricted on Manor Road by blocking it in the middle to protect the health and safety of residents.
- The proposal to have the new spine road joining the A358 between Silk Mills roundabout and the Nuffield hospital contravenes Policy TAU2, which clearly states “ A new Northern Link Road extending from the Silk Mills roundabout on the A358 to Kingston Road, with the provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton” (SADMP page 61).
- The spine road should be built as a distributor road at 7.3m wide with bus lay-bys.
- *[Sustrans]* question the design of the spine road – whilst not doubting it meets SCC guidance, it is not in line with ‘best practice’. Lane widths 3.2 to 3.9 metres should be avoided.
- Spine road needs dedicated cycle lanes separate from the road and on both sides.
- The spine road should be completed before the development starts.
- James Turner, of PM Asset Management (Promotor of the East proposal) assured everyone at a consultation meeting at Staplegrove Village Hall on July 3rd 2015, that the Spine Road would be completed before any houses were built.
- The recent news of Taunton becoming a “Garden Town” and being given Government Funding with other opportunities for more funding, may be the answer for the Spine Road to be completed before any houses are built.
- £5m should be borrowed from the government by the developers to build the spine road first, thus promoting sustainability from the outset
- Even if the whole proposed spine road is built at first, the pressure on Taunton’s inadequate traffic systems will be severe.
- The spine road will never be built because there are too many people

involved.

- The developer is an asset management firm which is designed to maximise returns and the Spine road is an extremely costly element of the build, so it is very unlikely to ever willingly build the road unless forced to.
- This is a commercial venture and so the developers could borrow the money to build the spine road first.
- The spine road goes from nowhere to nowhere and will have no effect on the current traffic difficulties.
- The spine road is not suitable as a potential future ring road.
- The spine road must not have individual accesses or other features that would detract from its primary function.
- The precise route of the spine road varies among the documents in application.
- The spine road has an awkward looking 'dog-leg' shape.
- How is it proposed to control the noise from the spine road and will nearby residents receive compensation.
- I consider signal controlled junctions much better than roundabouts in urban areas since this can provide bus priority and safe pedestrian and cycle access.
- The spine road and the blocking of other local roads will make travelling north/south and vice-versa impossible.
- There needs to be a pedestrian crossing over the spine road where it is proposed to cross Whitmore Lane.
- The proposal to have some houses' with direct frontage access onto a 30mph spine is in conflict with manual for Streets guidance. Cyclists and pedestrians alike will be placed at risk.
- The proposed spine road would be dangerous for road users and pedestrians at a speed limit of 30 mph without any calming traffic measures.
- Eastern end of spine road must be constructed before building commences to enable construction traffic to reach phase 1a and negate need for temporary access.
- The start of any development building must be from the east end connection of the spine road to Kingston Road.
- The proposed drop down road near Village World Furniture should not be allowed to happen. Even as "temporary" it will be long enough to be a traffic hazard.
- The dropdown road would give the developers a convenient site access whilst delaying the cost of the spine road to a later date.
- What guarantees are there that the 'temporary' access points onto Manor Road at Village World and onto Corkscrew Lane opposite Clifford Avenue to allow 'pockets of development', would not become permanent?
- Commercial vehicles could not turn into the dropdown road without using the whole width of Corkscrew Lane thus causing a hazard and traffic hold ups.
- A breach is proposed in the trees to the fields north of Corkscrew Lane in order to create a footpath and cycle track. Widen that breach in order to create an estate-type of road to access that land from the north instead of from Corkscrew Lane.
- Traffic calming will slow down traffic leading to additional emissions and noise, having a deteriorating impact on those living nearby.
- Do not need a roundabout where the spine road meets Kingston Road.
- Significant improvements would need to be made to the road layout to ensure

that Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Road/Clifford Avenue don't just become even more of a rat run.

- Existing and future increased traffic problems and road safety in Hope Corner Lane.
- Need traffic calming along Hope Corner Lane.
- Use of Clifford Avenue in attempts to 'beat the system' on Kingston Road is already causing concern (high vehicle speeds). This will be greatly increased if the planned site access onto Corkscrew Lane immediately opposite to Clifford Avenue is allowed.
- Close off through traffic in Clifford Avenue and Whitmore Road so that only residents could use it in a one way direction. This would also stop the 'Rat Running' that already occurs.
- The current proposal for the spine road is in direct conflict with the County's promotion of safe cycle ways.
- The proposal shows a cycle path on one side of the spine road only which will force cyclists to cross the spine road if travelling to or from its southern side.
- There does not appear to be any joined up thinking in regard to traffic, road use, bus service provision.
- Cars will be a necessity which precludes a "modal change in transport".
- Public transport must be made a priority, particularly linking the site to the train station.
- Access to Taunton academy is poor.
- There must be a footpath along Kingston Road from the proposed junction with the spine road.
- The development will generate more cyclists and there will not be sufficient cycle parking facilities.
- Need a cycle route running onto Gypsy Lane.
- Need more traffic free cycle routes as part of the proposal.
- The proposal does not meet any of the Council's policies in respect of sustainable transport and the need to reduce the reliance on the private motor car.
- Policy TAU2 (SADMP) demands "good cycle connections to existing cycle routes" The council must act now to ensure that a fit for purpose cycle network is in place in order to encourage more sustainable forms of transport.
- Rectory Road is not suitable as a main cyclist route, due to the tight turn at the junction with Manor.
- Given that the council are pursuing "Garden Town" status there should be a commitment by the Council to provide a first class, seamless cycle network both towards the town and station and from the development to Taunton Academy.
- The parish of Kingston St Mary is developing a community plan. A household survey showed that a sizeable majority find it important to have off- road pedestrian and cycle routes that link Kingston St Mary village and the wider parish to Taunton.
- It is essential that the north-south cycling/walking link via the East Staplegrove extends at least as far as Nailsbourne (from where there are options to link through to Kingston). This would act as a traffic mitigation measure for the new development.
- There are no guarantees that either CIL or other funds will be in place to fund junction improvement works.
- The plans do not show that it integrates into its surrounding in terms of



connectivity.

- There is no proposal for subsidised public transport to the development in the council's IDP therefore there can be no guarantee that buses to serve the spine road will be provided.
- TDBC need to work with SCC in order to develop a sustainable transport strategy before any new housing developments are allowed to proceed.
- Very little detail has been given on how parking will work for the residents.
- There must be strict allocation of off-road parking for residents and visitors.
- Need good off-road parking facilities because parking on-street would be detrimental to appearance.
- It is not realistic to suppose that the operation of Travel Plans will encourage more sustainable modes of transport.
- Street lighting columns should not be higher than the nearest buildings and fitted with lanterns that restrict stray light pollution, to mitigate the intrusion of urban development into the countryside.
- Need clearer and more detailed proposals for the road improvements before consent is given for the means of access.
- Increasing pollution from yet more slow moving traffic is of great concern.

#### **4. Flooding and drainage issues.**

- The flooding risk proposals seem to be based on out of date information, as weather patterns have significantly changed in the last few years.
- The models for attenuation areas are not adequate for the change in climate patterns for future years.
- Flooding will almost certainly ensue as it is already occurring at the junction of Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Lane.
- Roads around Staplegrove flood on a regular basis.
- The development must provide exclusive highway drainage and not add to the problems of Kingston Road. This issue needs to be examined and resolved before any decision is taken.
- The existing road drains are inadequate to cope with the additional hard surface water run-off that this vast estate will generate.
- Due to the high cost of flood prevention, the easy way out will be to allow homes to flood.
- The proper provision and maintenance of SUDs are vital parts of developers' plans to attempt to alleviate the very serious problem of surface flooding. TDBC must not allow developers to wriggle out of this cost
- Attenuation ponds will not be able to cope. What happens when they get full and it continues raining.
- Will be a similar situation to that recently highlighted in Bideford, where the ponds created to take the flood water from the new housing didn't work.
- If not properly maintained the 'SUDS' will become a problem.
- Such a high density of houses in place of fields is a concern re increased flooding to neighbouring properties and beyond.
- Who will maintain the attenuation ponds?
- Water drainage details are theoretically acceptable but relies upon regular maintenance. With cutbacks this might not happen.
- It is not verified whether policy I4 of the SADMP can be met, regarding the

need for adequate drainage with all new proposals.

- Covering these fields with housing will only serve to increase the flow of water into the Tone and therefore out to the Somerset Levels.
- Flood mitigation measures must be put in place before development commences.
- Rigorous ongoing maintenance of the SUDS across the scheme must be a condition of any planning permission.
- A summer flash flood will/cannot be totally captured and restrained.
- While flooding on site may be prevented there may well be new problems downstream.
- Flooding currently occurs because drains in the gutter often clog with leaves and the frequency of clearing drains is inadequate.
- Cannot grant planning permission until proper provision for sewerage disposal has been made.

## **5. Landscape impact, loss of open countryside and agricultural land issues**

- This development will completely alter the visual beauty of this area.
- Kingston Road is an attractive route to the AONB, lined with hedgerows and ancient trees. To make the necessary improvement to this road to accommodate any increase in traffic will require removal of these hedgerows and trees - the urbanisation of this natural heritage.
- Staplegrove is on the edge of the countryside at the base of the Quantock Hills and should not be overwhelmed by this development.
- The expansion of Staplegrove threatens both the identity of Kingston as a separate community and the quality of the environment that the AONB represents.
- The large areas of woodland proposed to the north east of the site as a screen to the development should allow public footpath access to provide some degree of public gain for the loss of the open views across land.
- Loss of wonderful countryside and rural feel this side of Taunton.
- Concerned at the loss of trees.
- The public car parks at Cothelstone Hill and on the Macmillan Way West on the Quantocks are almost invariably full at weekends when there is good weather. This problem will be exacerbated by the development.
- We need to ensure that we do not destroy the beauty of the landscape by overbuilding in an unsympathetic way.
- The failure to recognise the importance of the Quantocks AONB is in breach of Policy D 2 (approach routes to Taunton and Wellington; development which would harm the visual qualities of routes into and out of Taunton will not be permitted
- It is too close to the AONB and will have major adverse effects on its visual landscape and heritage values, resulting in a loss to its local and national value, integrity and distinctiveness.
- The Quantocks AONB with its SSSI is almost totally ignored.
- The development would clearly be visible from the Quantocks during the winter months.
- This proposal will diminish the green corridor between Taunton and

Kingston-St.-Mary.

- Urban extensions have the potential to alter the wider character of settlements by extending urban boundaries.
- Evidence for any reduction in the size of the 'Green Wedge' from that stipulated by the Council must be scientific and not economic.
- Loss of historic hedgerows.
- Concern about the loss of good agricultural land, known as Best & Most Versatile land. This development in Staplegrove (east) will result in the loss of 70 ha of agricultural land, 48 ha of which is classed as BMV [CPRE].
- Taunton has a large number of brownfield areas which should be developed before this BMV land is released for housing
- This is prime agricultural land and should be used for food production, not concreted over.
- There is no mitigation for the loss of class 2/3a agricultural land.
- Our local Farming and Agriculture Industry is progressively being eroded by peripheral 'greenfield' development. The many businesses that provide support services to the farming industry will also suffer.
- National Trust members are horrified that the Trust is giving up good farmland. Does HRH Prince Charles as president of the Trust know about this?
- It is wrong for the National Trust to sell land for development as it clearly breaches its remit to preserve our country's historic landscape and building heritage.
- What gives the present custodians of our countryside the right to cause damage in the proposed way by building houses 2½ storeys high which are completely out of keeping with local properties?

## **6. Employment issues.**

- Provision of new houses without additional employment in Taunton for the inhabitants.
- There is no work in Taunton so people will travel to other towns for employment.
- Taunton is not seen as a vibrant location for employment, with plenty of premises already available in areas such as the Crown Industrial Estate.
- It is not sustainable to build houses here when people will travel to Bristol and Exeter to work.
- Taunton desperately requires medium sized industries and a ring road around the town, not more houses.
- There must be plans for bringing some additional employers to the area otherwise it will end up as a very costly ghost town.
- It is worrying to note that the Council's Monitoring Report, which includes the council's measure of employment 'growth', uses labour supply rather than labour demand. An increase in housing will boost labour supply figures, thus giving the false impression that all is well with the Core Strategy employment prediction. This is misleading.
- The Office for National Statistics show a downward projection of the labour demand in Taunton compared to the upward trend predicted in the Core Strategy.

## **7. Wildlife and ecology**

- Any building in the area will have a huge detrimental impact on the local bat population.
- Any lighting would have a detrimental impact on the bats and their ability to hunt.
- Impact on bats, their feeding routes and roosting sites.
- The mitigations provided for the bats is insufficient.
- The junction onto Kingston Road must be moved northwards to avoid the destruction of so many trees.
- Too many trees are proposed to be removed.
- The loss of trees and hedgerows will affect habitats and wildlife.
- Loss of trees and hedgerows for the new junction onto Kingston Road.
- There needs to be mitigation included in the building of the spine road to incorporate under road animal tunnels to prevent slaughter and to allow the movement of wildlife across the area.
- There is very limited environmental assessment presented in the Planning Application.
- The application does not detail all the wildlife known to be present in the fields within the proposed development.
- The loss of prime agricultural land will have a devastating effect on wildlife.
- The application is suggesting the total destruction of huge areas of hedges some several hundred years old.
- Environmental harm caused by loss of hedgerows along Corkscrew Lane specifically.
- The developers have not taken into account the huge amount and variety of the bird and wild life in the area.
- The removal of hedgerows are covered by The Hedgerows Regulation 1997. A hedgerow retention notice should be issued for all the hedgerows alongside Rectory road.
- No work should be done to the hedgerows between 1st March and 31st August in order to protect nesting birds, in line with the associated legislation.
- There is no mention or mitigation against the effect on the House Martins in the planning application, which are a protected species given amber status due to declining numbers.
- The spine road will transect the green wedge making it difficult for wildlife to head south.

## **8. The urban environment and design**

- The height of the proposed houses should be kept in character with the existing properties.
- The outline designs show amorphous housing estates that do not relate to any existing settlement or indeed to each other and will be cut in half by a through road to Kingston St Mary.
- Density is a concern with 1500 plus new houses.
- Density is too high for a development on the far outskirts of town.
- The Garden Town Bid requires a much higher urban residential density to

actually render the town centre viable a cultural centre.

- The out of scale proposals make a mockery of the Taunton Garden Town and should be rejected.
- Building this vast number of modern homes in a very confined area will ruin the identity of a small village on the outskirts of Taunton, right on the borders of both the Quantocks AONB and Exmoor National Park.
- Will completely transform the character of Staplegrove and lead to the loss of its historic character.
- Staplegrove village must be protected.
- The village currently adjoins open countryside and this amenity will be lost.
- This enormous development will dwarf the surrounding villages.
- The expansion of Staplegrove threatens the identity of Kingston as a separate community.
- Building designs and positioning should be in keeping with the current Staplegrove village area.
- Either this North Taunton community is one new stand-alone community focused on its central Green wedge or it is two separate suburban additions, respectively to two existing communities Staplegrove(West) and North Taunton/Pyrland-Rowbarton (East). It cannot be both.
- Where is a sense of community, a sense of place and identity in what is in effect a vast housing estate?
- The density, building heights at 2.5 storeys, and size of the buildings proposed are not in keeping with the local environment.
- Some dwellings especially those exceeding 2 storeys will affect the right of peaceful enjoyment of home, land and the privacy of existing residents.
- Fear of overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy for existing residents.
- The overall lack of green space in the west is totally unacceptable.
- We need more green spaces and fewer houses.
- This 'city type' development will not blend with the rural aspect of the area.
- The homes in Corkscrew Lane/Clifford Ave/Whitmore Rd/Turner Rd/Lewis Rd etc. date back to the 1930s, and the new development would not be in keeping with this area.
- The junction of the new spine road onto Kingston Road is too close to the Listed Building at Okehills (impact).
- We do not need any more allotments.

## **9. Housing**

- Statistics show that Taunton already has far more houses being built in proportion to the existing number of houses than elsewhere in England. It cannot support this growth either economically, sustainably or in terms of infrastructure.
- The need for more housing here has been calculated using a mathematical formula rather than market research to identify numbers of possible buyers.
- The latest housing figures from Somerset Intelligence do not support the housing predictions on which the SADMP is based.
- Housing here is not top priority for Taunton.
- The number of homes proposed is earmarked by drawing a few lines on a map then the developer planning to maximise profit by having the highest

density of homes they think they can get away with.

- Need high rise apartments not low level estates, but not here.
- Taunton doesn't have that many homeless people and there are plenty of empty houses, so we do not need another 3000 new homes.
- There are hundreds of houses available to buy in Taunton, at all price levels, so why build more.
- The density of housing suggests minimal gardens.
- Residential properties should be made to have minimum garden lengths.
- Density of houses is too much of an 'urban' definition and should be reduced to integrate more with Staplegrove's character as a well-defined 'rural' village.
- The development does not specify how it meets the relevant Code for Sustainable Homes rendering the application contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP1b.
- The Council should deliver on its policy Core Strategy Policy CP4 to provide affordable housing, an appropriate proportion of which should be social rented.
- The policy figure of 25% affordable housing, as stipulated in both the Core Strategy and the SADMP, must be adhered to.
- A miserly 25% investment in so called 'affordable' homes defeats the object of providing cheaper houses for local people who desperately need them.
- Surely the developers had a good idea of the viability at the outset. If 25% affordable housing is policy, then it should be adhered to and not modified so that the developers can make more profit.
- It may be tactical for the developers to request a relaxation in affordable housing at this late stage, as so much time and effort has been invested by all concerned that the developers think that the council could not refuse their proposals.
- The developers appear to be backing down on their commitment to the correct level of affordable housing, because of the costs involved in building in this area. Did they ever study the topography before drawing their plans?
- Need greater emphasis on housing for older and more vulnerable people.
- There is a need for single storey houses for the over 55 year olds.
- This is an opportunity for self-build dwellings (no mention in the application).
- Sale of houses on existing sites is very slow, so we don't need any more.
- We need clarity on the number of houses being built.
- The closure of Norton Manor Camp with its existing houses and those that will be proposed to replace much of the camp, must be taken into account.
- We now hear of suggestions for a new M5 junction, 25a (?) and a new building development for 3000 houses South of the motorway. This is remarkably and would obviate the need for these highly controversial proposals for building on the agricultural, green fields of Staplegrove.

## 10. Other comments

- Huge impact on CO2 and other emissions.
- How are increased pollution levels to be managed.
- Risks to health of people living near the electro-magnetic fields of the pylons and 'grounding' the cables will not get rid of this.

- A CEMP must be produced at an early stage and with full consultation with local Parish Councils and residents alike.
- The various traffic, flooding and environmental studies produced as part of the North Taunton planning applications will have been commissioned and presumably paid for by the developers. These studies may therefore be subject to “funding bias”.
- Taunton is the poor man of Somerset. When the Council moved the market to North Petherton it took the heart from the town.
- The proposal cannot rightly be described as an “urban extension to Taunton” when it generally falls well to the other side of a whole sizeable village, making it more an “expansion of Staplegrove”.
- The density of houses is too much of an ‘urban’ definition and should be reduced to integrate more with Staplegrove’s character as a well-defined ‘rural’ village where each dwelling has good garden space for both leisure and vegetable/fruit growing.
- It’s all unsustainable development of the worst urban sprawl kind with really ugly housing densities to match
- Any construction work should be restricted to between 9 and 5 on weekdays and Saturday mornings only.
- With an extended construction period of up to 10/12 years there will be a material impact on the quality of life for local residents.
- Concerns relating to noise and dust pollution during the course of development and from construction traffic.
- Will reduce values of existing properties in the area.
- I will not be able to sell my house.
- It would be against the overall Core Strategy for this large development to be allowed to go ahead except as a total package.
- Piecemeal development starting at the eastern, Kingston Road, end must not be allowed to proceed without having to contribute a full share towards infrastructure costs and without an overall master plan for delivery of the whole project being in place.
- The ‘Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington future transport strategy, 2011 – 2026’, states 500 houses as being the broad development area of Staplegrove.
- Vibration from the building of the spine road and its use in the future will damage the foundations of properties and create subsidence, particularly those with very shallow footings.
- This development is for profit and not the health and wellbeing of the residents.
- What was once a beautiful Georgian county town, surrounded by small villages with their own distinct identities, is now an ill-planned amorphous mass of identi-kit low grade building stock – most of it built over the last 30 years.
- Given a proposed total of 1,628 new dwellings across the two sites there is no chance whatsoever of developing attractive housing stock at sensible densities.
- Impact of lighting, especially street lighting, on existing residents.
- Impact of increased noise levels, particularly from cars.
- In splitting and staggering their submissions, the developers are using a

strategy to distract and confuse and, for some of their options, to arrive at a fait accompli.

- The developer appears to have completely ignored much of the feedback they have received from the residents and discussions at the planning meeting held by TDBC in December 2015.
- These builders are land speculators first and housing developers second. Their primary objective is to secure profits for their investors.
- Corkscrew Lane is the outer limit of development of Taunton and it is very important that everything possible is done to see that this fringe-of-town rural aspect is preserved fully for both Clifford Avenue and Whitmore Road. The Staplegrove Urban Extension must be a very separate entity.
- Taunton Deane has an appalling record in the management of projects, such as the failure to secure the new market that went to Bridgwater, the debacle of the new inner relief road and the embarrassment of Firepool Lock.
- No one will listen to our pleas for refusal.
- TDBC will not want to lose out on the current level of government money which comes with allowing many more houses to be built, but if TDBC is really short of money why not put up the Council Tax instead and correct the infrastructure first?
- Do not trust Taunton Deane to properly represent the interests of existing residents.
- Current residents of the area who are paying Officer's wages through their taxes deserve more consideration of their well-reasoned arguments.
- The Government's Localism initiative should mean that local communities have the final say about what happened in their area. This is quite clearly not the case.
- Some of the land adjoining Corkscrew Lane belongs to the National Trust. This land was gifted to them on the condition that it would not be sold for building on. We therefore believe that the N.T. has a moral and legal, duty not to sell this land.
- The National Trust have sold out to developers when they should be protecting land for the benefit of the nearby population and wildlife.
- Pyrland Hall, a Georgian Mansion dating from 1752, is listed as Grade 2\*. The Conservation Officer must be allowed the opportunity of protecting its significant surroundings.
- Increasing tourism to this area would be a far better long term income stream.
- My right to the peaceful enjoyment of all my possessions including my home and garden will be seriously affected if this development is allowed to go ahead.
- It cannot be described as an "urban extension to Taunton" when it generally falls well to the other side of a whole sizeable village, making it more an "expansion of Staplegrove".
- Insufficient time to comment on such a massive submission.
- How will local residents be shielded from the noise, dust, mud and general disruption caused by a development of this major size and scale?
- Constant building will have an effect on the health of local residents.
- These plans are not a vision for the future but a vision for disaster.
- The plans and commentary supplied are neither detailed nor extensive enough to allow precise comment on the most significant issues.
- Compensation required for loss of views.
- Rubbish collection in the area is currently only once every 2 weeks. Adding



900 extra homes to this list will be a massive task for the underfunded council.

- Councillors are required to apply all policies and strategies including planning policies in accordance with their overall responsibilities as Trustees for the environmental, social and economic well-being of Taunton.

There have also been 11 representations received in support of the development, with a further 3 making neutral observations. The main issues raised include:

- No objection in principle to the expansion of this area of Taunton.
- The U.K. has a desperate shortage of housing.
- This new development will provide badly-needed new homes to the area at a time of a national housing crisis. There are difficulties facing the young generation when it comes to finding and affording a new home. This opportunity cannot be missed.
- I want to congratulate Taunton Deane's proactive housing and employment strategy, which is an example to the rest of the country.
- More affordable housing will help people in the area get on the housing ladder.
- Many of those objecting are people who live in houses that have been built over the last 20 – 30 years. How many objections were made about those houses?
- This is a very sensible location to build being so close to the train station and centre of Taunton.
- The developers should be congratulated on a really good quality scheme.
- The Developers have gone to great lengths to consult and engage with the community over a period of time and have taken on board points made to them and have delivered a scheme of quality that responds to local needs as much as is possible.
- There has been talk of building on this land for many years and it is now in the Core Strategy, so there can be little surprise that this area is now going to be developed given that housing is in such short supply.
- An increased population will benefit the businesses in the town centre.
- We want quality, we need new and improved roads, new schools, green open space and sound ecological plans, but all this costs money and it's got to come from somewhere. A smaller development won't be able to support the necessary and desired infrastructure. Support for what is proposed will.
- I agree with the Core Strategy that Staplegrove is a suitable location for such a development, preferable to multiple smaller developments which cannot supply the same level of facilities, or less accessible more rural areas.
- By providing valuable resources and homes for the area, this development can only promote and improve the area's economy and vibrancy.
- There have been comments about the size and scale of the proposals, but this has to be better than a series of disjointed piecemeal sites springing up across the area over the next twenty years and not delivering the new roads, infrastructure and benefits that a larger, thoughtfully-planned scheme today will
- [*Headteacher – Taunton Academy*] - The increased catchment area and additional students the development would bring, would have a very positive impact on the academy, bringing increased funding and resourcing and result in improved service and offer.
- [*Headteacher – Taunton Academy*] - The spine road would improve the local

road network and reduce school run traffic currently having to use Cork Screw Lane.

- *[Headteacher – Taunton Academy]* – The affordable housing and new homes will help some of my staff and families to get onto the housing ladder.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - This new development would bring space, resources and opportunities through CIL for new educational facilities which are much needed, particularly for early years. providers.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - Significant attention has been given to ecology, wildlife and sustainability.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - We are impressed by the level of green space and play space being provided.
- The development will not have a direct impact upon the AONB, the foothills of which start on the far side of Kingston St. Mary, several miles away from the proposed development.
- The proposal has a good mix of spaces and facilities, and environmental enhancements such as woodland and catering for lesser horseshoe bats.
- Need to allow public access to the large areas of woodland proposed to the north-east of the site.
- The only low lying land is along the East side of Whitmore Lane, which is allocated as open flood plain; the land identified for building has never flooded.
- A spine road in the plans submitted. It will provide a much needed relief route round this section of Taunton.
- A smaller development will not be able to support the necessary and desired infrastructure.
- Local sports clubs have struggled for numbers and the extra population should support the local cricket, football, hockey and tennis clubs and perhaps also Staplegrove Church, as well as local schools, theatres, restaurants, and pubs, including 'The Swan' at Kingston, all of which are essential to a vibrant community.
- If this scheme does not go through, how long will it be before the next developer comes forward, and can we be confident a better outcome can be achieved?

Full copies of all representations that have been received are available on the electronic planning file, which is available to view online.

## Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), saved policies of the Taunton Deane Local Plan (2004), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework,  
SS6 - Staplegrove - Broad location for growth,  
TAU2 - Staplegrove,  
SD1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development,  
CP8 - Environment,  
CP6 - Transport and accessibility,  
CP4 - Housing,  
CP7 - Infrastructure,  
CP5 - Inclusive communities,  
CP2 - Economy,  
AFF HOUS - Affordable Housing 2014,  
D9 - A Co-Ordinated Approach to Dev and Highway Plan,  
I1 - Powerlines,  
IM1 - Priorities for developer funding,  
IM2 - Approach to viability,  
SP1 - Sustainable development locations,  
SP2 - Realising the vision for Taunton,  
SB1 - Settlement boundaries,  
DM2 - Development in the countryside,  
D1 - Taunton's skyline,  
A5 - Accessibility of development,  
DM4 - Design,  
D7 - Design quality,  
A2 - Travel Planning,  
A3 - Cycle network,  
AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,  
ROW - Rights of Way,

## Local finance considerations

### Community Infrastructure Levy

This is an outline application so no floor plans are submitted. However, a Density Plan has been submitted. So this calculation has been based on the residential testing assumptions for a medium density development.

#### Residential:

Approximate floor areas calculated at 83,800m<sup>2</sup>. 10% of this floor area is outside the settlement limits of Taunton and Wellington where the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is £125 per square metre. Based on current rates, the CIL receipt for this part of the development is approximately £1,047,500.00. With index linking this increases to approximately £1,237,000.00. 90% of this floor area is in Taunton where the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is £70 per square metre. Based on current rates, the CIL receipt for this development is approximately £5,280,000.00. With index linking this increases to approximately £6,230,000.00.

#### Retail:

No details of the proposed local centre have been submitted or shown on the Masterplans. It is therefore not possible to even estimate the amount of CIL that will be paid on the retail units provided but this will be charged at £140 per square metre regardless of its location within the development.

### New Homes Bonus

The development of this site would result in payment to the Council of the New Homes Bonus. The application states that it seeks permission for up to 915 new dwelling units, so the figures below have been based on 915. The eventual number of dwellings built could be less than this, meaning the amount of New Homes Bonus would be less as well. The figures below also assume 25% affordable housing, which has now been challenged with the viability process. So the figures given are very much a maximum.

#### *1 Year Payment*

Taunton Deane Borough	£ 987,347
Somerset County Council	£ 246,837

#### *6 Year Payment*

Taunton Deane Borough	£5,924,084
Somerset County Council	£1,481,021

## Determining issues and considerations

### Planning policy and the principle of development.

The application must be considered in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. At the point of the determination of this application the Development Plan comprises the Taunton Deane Local Plan 2004 (as retained), the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013). The NPPF is a significant material consideration and informs the weight that should be given to the Development Plan policies.

#### (a) National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on the 27th March 2012, confirming the Government's commitment to streamlining the planning system and encouraging growth. It introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system in terms of both plan making and decision taking to promote a positive approach towards planning and growth. The NPPF emphasises that 'planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.' In doing so the NPPF states that 'local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The relationship between decision-taking and plan-making should be seamless, translating plans into high quality development on the ground.'

The following chapters of the NPPF are relevant considerations for this application -

- Chapter 1: Building a strong, competitive economy;
- Chapter 4: Promoting sustainable transport;
- Chapter 6: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes;
- Chapter 7: Requiring good design;
- Chapter 8: Promoting healthy communities;
- Chapter 9: Protecting Green Belt land;
- Chapter 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change;
- Chapter 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; and
- Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

More specifically, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance requires local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

The NPPF sets out three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF states (para. 52) that the provision of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages or towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.

The Government’s support for good design is reiterated in paragraph 56 of the NPPF which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. The guidance states that new development should:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area.
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including public open space) and support local facilities and transport networks.
- Respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surrounds and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.
- Create safe and accessible environments.
- Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Paragraph 66 states that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the view of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design for the new development should be looked on more favourably.

Section 8 sets out some key objectives for facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. It states that decisions should aim to achieve places which promote:

- Opportunities for meeting between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active frontages.
- Safe and accessible environments.
- Safe and accessible developments containing clear and legible pedestrian routes which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

This current proposal needs to reflect all of these aims.

(b) The Government's Garden Village and Garden Towns Programme.

As part of its expansion of the existing Garden Towns programme, the Government is committed to support locally-led development and has announced funds to support delivery of these projects over the next two financial years. The Government announced Taunton as one of three new garden towns on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017. The Council's successful 'expression of interest' bid identified that substantial growth will be delivered in Taunton through three new sustainable high quality communities at Monkton Heathfield/Nerrols, Comeytrove and Staplegrove. This was at the heart of its bid, identifying that the new garden communities will be a key driver and tool in the delivery of the transformational growth and vision for Taunton as a Garden Town, whilst retaining the highly valued county town 'quality of life'. As a result of this new status, revenue funding of £350,000 has been secured for the year 2016/17 and there is an expectation that a future award may be available for the year 2017/18 for which the Council has already made a request for funding.

(c) The Housing White Paper – 'Fixing our broken housing market' (February 2017)

The Government has issued a new Housing White Paper, because, in their view, the existing housing market is "broken". The aim is to make housing more affordable and give people the security they need to plan for the future. The Government see the starting point as being to build more homes because this will slow the rise in housing costs. The HWP is a consultation paper, so it's not policy, but does give a clear indication of the Government's strategy for housing delivery. It concentrates on 4 main themes -

- The need for more land for homes where people want to live.
- Building homes faster once planning permissions are granted.
- Diversification of the housing market, opening it up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods.
- Take more steps to continue helping people now, by improving safeguards in the private rented sector, and doing more to prevent homelessness and to help households currently priced out of the market.

There are a number of key issues mooted in the White Paper which it is worth noting, because they are directly relevant to considerations of this current application.

- The new White Paper suggests revised wording for the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Whilst there is currently a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' the National Planning Policy Framework does not require an assessment of whether a proposal is sustainable before applying the presumption. Therefore, the Government are proposing to make it clear that the three dimensions (economics social and environmental) are part of the definition of sustainable development.
- There is a stronger expectation on avoiding low density and maximising use of land. Although the White Paper has shied away from prescribing densities, it is clear that there is an expectation that they will be greater than hitherto has been the norm.
- Recognition that there is a significant gap between planning permissions given and implementations.
- The need for at least 10% affordable housing units in any scheme
- No pre-conditions to be used unless the applicant has given written authority to

use them

- Viability has not been addressed in the HWP, but maybe in the s106/CIL arrangements to be announced in the autumn statement.

(d) The Taunton Deane Borough Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2012 and sets out the vision for the Deane and the policies to meet that vision. In the context of this application it performs a number of roles. Firstly, it specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough until the year 2028 and identifies the locations for developments and mixed-use urban extensions. Most crucially however, it identifies land at Staplegrove as a broad location for the delivery of between 500 and 1,500 new homes. This is policy SS 6. It identifies two development areas at Staplegrove separated by an extension to the Staplegrove green wedge to the north on either side of Mill Lease stream. The western area is stated as extending around the northern edge of Staplegrove village and the eastern area extending across to Kingston Road. The adopted policy explains that these two areas are proposed to be accessed by a new road from Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road, which would provide an alternative route to provide a reduction of through traffic on Manor Road and environmental enhancement of Staplegrove village conservation area. It also makes clear that a masterplan will be prepared to co-ordinate development to provide the necessary physical social and green infrastructure. A piecemeal approach to development in this area before a comprehensive masterplan has been agreed will not be permitted.

Policy SD1 of the Core Strategy is also relevant as it sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with Government policy contained within the NPPF. It states that planning applications which accord with the policies of the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The 'other' material considerations will be discussed in detail below, but it is considered that in general terms, and subject to the conditions and planning obligations suggested, they do not indicate other than approval. Policy SP1 (Sustainable Development Locations) of the Core Strategy follows on by identifying the sustainable development locations. It states that development will be focussed on the Taunton Urban Area, which needs to accommodate at least 13,000 new homes in the period up to 2028. This position is carried through in policy SP2 of the Core Strategy (Realising the vision for Taunton) where Staplegrove is identified as broad location for the development of between 500 and 1,500 dwellings.

Other policies, namely CP1 (Climate Change), CP4 (Housing), CP5 (Inclusive Communities), CP6 (Transport and accessibility), CP7 (Infrastructure) and CP8 (Environment) are relevant because they identify broad general requirements in relevant subject areas. The requirements of these policies are not generally site specific, but lay ground rules for acceptability of schemes. It is not considered that there are any requirements within any of these 6 policies which either are not or cannot be met by this proposal.

(e) Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP).

The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan [SADMP] was formally adopted in December 2016. Spatial policy TAU2 (Staplegrove) states that the area identified will deliver new sustainable neighbourhoods. It makes clear that "any planning application will need to be accompanied by a masterplan and phasing



strategy with associated infrastructure, prepared by the developer in conjunction with the Borough Council and other stakeholders". This policy identifies a number of items which are listed as being essential for inclusion in the masterplan and the discussion below considers these requirements in turn and provides a view on the extent to which the application will satisfy these requirements:

- Phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes at an overall average net density of 35-40 dwellings per hectare;

The outline application seeks to deliver 915 dwellings. It would appear from the submission that the site will deliver appropriate densities across the site but this will need to be clarified in any Reserved Matters submission. The consideration should not be the actual number itself, but whether the amount of housing now proposed can fit into the site, taking on board the Governments proposal for higher densities as a requirement, and taking on board all of the other planning requirements.

- Affordable housing at 25% of total provision in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP4: Housing;

The applicants are seeking a reduction in the amount of affordable housing as part of a viability exercise which maintains that the amount of infrastructure the Council is seeking will make the site unviable. The position on the viability exercise is reported below. The precise mix and tenure will need to be agreed by Members and guaranteed through negotiations relating to the s106 obligation. Please also refer to comments submitted by the Housing Enabling Manager.

- A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road, comprising a convenience store (A1) of up to 500 m2 (gross); 500 m2 of other convenience retailing (A1), financial/professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3); at least one public house (A4), take-away (Class A5) and a community hall building (comprising of main hall, storage, kitchen, toilets) and associated parking, together with 0.25ha of land for a place of worship. Residential or office uses should be provided on upper floors;

Whilst the outline application incorporates the provision of a local centre, it is currently unclear, from the supporting documentation, whether the proposed local centre will meet the policy requirements for the mix of uses proposed in Policy TAU1. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the local centre provides what is envisaged in the policy. This will be covered by a condition which will ensure delivery of the local centre in accordance with a detailed design brief that will have been previously negotiated and agreed.

- A minimum of 2 hectares of serviced employment land comprising Class B1 b and c., Class B2 and Class B8 use; and other appropriate employment generating activities which would generate similar employment densities (excepting main town centre uses such as retail, leisure and offices.);

Whilst the outline application incorporates the provision of employment land, further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the employment land is incorporated as envisaged in Policy TAU2. This can however be achieved.

- A 2.5ha site for a 14-class, 2-form intake primary school with preschool facilities:  
Officers have been working closely with Somerset County Council and the applicants to ensure a primary school is delivered on site. The Masterplan identifies a potential location for an area for a primary school site and although this is situated within the Staplegrove east site, it is clearly meant to serve both new communities. The comments of the County Education Authority on this issue are given earlier in the report and discussed in the relevant section below.
- An extension of the existing Green Wedge on either side of Mill Lease Stream, between Corkscrew Lane and the open countryside north of the existing 132kV power lines:  
Concerns have been raised that the extent of the new Green Wedge is smaller than that proposed in adopted policy TAU2. The extension proposed in the application is narrower east to west. This will be discussed in greater detail in the landscape section below.

The applicants point to the fact that the Green Wedge assessment does not provide an evidence base for the rationale behind the extent and boundary of the proposed extension. In fact, they maintain that the location of the proposed northern boundary could allow development to wrap around the top of the green wedge and therefore limit its effectiveness as a continuous green infrastructure asset linking Taunton to the countryside to the north. The applicants have consistently raised this as a concern, but the SADMP was adopted with no further information on the justification of the boundary. Through the ensuing iteration of the Staplegrove Framework Plan for the combined east and west Staplegrove developments, the shape, extent, complementary land uses and edges of the green wedge became more defined. The parameter and masterplan designs take into account the particular characteristics of the local landscape character areas here, the specific topography of the vale either side of the Mill Lease Stream and the relationship to the local and more distant visual horizons defined by tree belt and hedged boundaries and built form edges.

Neither core strategy policy SS6 nor SADMP policy TAU2 specify a size or dimension for the green wedge. The only reference to size is the very general indication given in the concept plan that accompanies policy TAU2, but even this is not an accurate reflection of the proposed boundary given in the Taunton Deane Green Wedge Assessment document of June 2015. In policy terms there is no stated requirement for any subsequent planning application at Staplegrove to exactly follow the boundary line of the proposed extension. The only real test afforded by policy consideration is the seven key objectives for green wedges listed in the justification for policy CP8 of the Core Strategy. The landscape section of this report (later on) explains how the green wedge now proposed meets all of these tests. It is concluded that the Staplegrove East Outline Planning application complies with or satisfies each objective. Officers believe that the current proposal still delivers the intention of the 'Green Wedge' and it is not considered that there is any reason to justify refusal on these grounds. On balance, and given that the proposal with this application is for a minimum size anyway, it is not considered by officers that such a small shortfall over the policy requirements could reasonably be considered to make the

application non-compliant with the proposed policy.

- Multi-functional green space (including; allotments, children's play, playing fields, recreational areas, amenity space) in line with the relevant standards;

The submitted documents confirm that the development will include parks, spaces and green corridors to meet policy requirements. Much of this will be negotiated through the s106 legal agreement. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the green space requirements are delivered. This is achievable.

- Diversion of or placing underground the existing 132kV power lines between the A358 and Rectory Road.

This is covered in greater detail below in the section entitled 'viability'. For greater detail on this issue, Members are referred to this section. The following brief summary is made here.

Undergrounding of the power lines has always been a requirement of the Council, partly because the applicant had always assured the Council that this objective was achievable. The applicant has been in discussions with the owner of the lines (Western Power Distribution - WPD) for some time now. It is relatively recently that WPD have written to the Council, through their solicitors, to explain that they do not wish the power lines to be undergrounded. This issue is being negotiated by the applicant. However, whatever the outcome, this need not stop positive consideration of the outline consent. So long as agreement were to be reached before the appropriate reserved matters were considered, then this part of the policy requirement could still be satisfied. A lack of undergrounding the powerlines would not in any event mean that development was not physically possible. In that situation, development could still take place, but the number of houses would probably need to be reduced in order to leave a clear passage immediately beneath the lines. Development though would clearly be preferable with the power lines undergrounded and so progress on the negotiations will be reported verbally to Members at the meeting.

In terms of the cost of any undergrounding, this is relevant because it affects the viability of the site. The applicant is of the opinion that the cost should be borne by the development itself, whereas officers are of the opinion that any such costs should be reflected in the land value being offered to the landowners. Officers have taken Counsels opinion on this point. The answer received is not entirely straightforward and so Members are again referred to the sections below which discuss all this in more detail.

- Strategic SUDS Infrastructure;

This has been done and is covered above by the comments from the relevant bodies. Conditions will be required to ensure delivery of the measures agreed.

- A new Northern Link Road extending from the western extent of the allocation on the A358 to Kingston Road, with provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton;

The applicants have confirmed that this will be provided. A feasibility study has been submitted to the Highway Authority to show a suggested alignment and

construction of such a road. This broadly accords with the alignment shown on the agreed masterplan. The Highways Authority has considered and accepted that it can be achieved to their standards. This however, is not a matter for confirmation with this application as the internal road layout of the proposals site will be a reserved matter. Members are simply asked to note at this stage that it can be achieved. The suggested alignment of the spine road and the proposed internal layout of this site has been designed to allow for any possible plans to provide a future extension to the spine road around the north-east of Taunton. However, this is not specifically part of this application.

- Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local access:

The original submission showed two new permanent points of access onto/off Corkscrew Lane - one north of Clifford Avenue and the other just south of the proposed green wedge. These have now both been removed as permanent accesses through negotiations and exploration of alternative options.

However, the application for the western side seeks permission for a temporary access off Corkscrew lane to access the first phase of development. It would appear logical that housing development for this site should start in the west and then this could be accessed off the new junction proposed for the spine road with Staplegrove Road. However, this is not possible. The difficulty faced by the applicant in this issue is that the western part of the site has deliberately been planned for open space, water attenuation and landscaping because the site has a higher flood risk, it does require screening to mitigate the impact of the development, it is the most topographically challenging part of the site particularly in respect of Rag Hill. Rag Hill is designated as a Special Landscape feature and therefore requires sensitive handling free from unnecessary development, and the land has to accommodate the junction of the spine road with Staplegrove Road. All this means that the housing development has to be away from the western end of the proposal. This means that a huge section of the spine road would have to be developed to access such a first phase of housing and given that the spine road and its associated infrastructure is a major financial investment and will be entirely privately funded, this would be uneconomic to achieve. The applicants maintain that the spine road cannot be built in advance of any homes, because profit from the homes is actually required to fund the road.

The applicants have looked at alternative options for this, but the temporary access onto Corkscrew Lane is stated as being the most viable option for them. The Borough Council and the County Highway Authority have consistently maintained that the spine road should be delivered within the first phase of development. This is also clearly something that residents and other stakeholders are keen to see achieved. The proposed spine road access junctions are a large proportion of the overall cost of the total spine road construction and access to any potential first phase of housing could not economically or reasonably be delivered until a proportion of the housing had been fully built out. To do so would not be viable. It is clear that any requirement to have the spine road completed before housing development commences would make the scheme uneconomic and unviable.

Other access points to the first phase of housing have been examined. A route could be delivered through Rectory Road but this would have a greater impact on the residents of Staplegrove Village. Whitmore Lane was another option but this road is unsuitable as it does not meet current highway standards and would in any event have an adverse impact upon nearby residents. Although the proposed first phase of housing development shares a frontage with the public highway at Rectory Road and at Whitmore Lane, neither are considered suitable locations for a temporary access road. Instead Corkscrew Lane was selected for the following reasons:

- There is an appropriate amount of site frontage with the public highway to deliver an access;
- There is adequate visibility in both directions at this location;
- A junction compliant with modern design standards is able to be delivered;
- It can provide access whilst maintaining a distance from Staplegrove Village and the existing housing east of Mill Lease Stream; and
- It would link well into existing cycle and pedestrian routes and will provide a suitable future pedestrian and cycle link into the proposed development.

So a temporary access is proposed off Corkscrew Lane in order to allow the western application to access land for housing development at an early stage (phase 1), which would not otherwise be available to them. It is proposed to access approximately 200 new dwellings in this way. The development and sale of these houses would then fund the costly infrastructure requirements of the spine road. The applicant has agreed that this temporary link will not at any time provide access for the Spine Road construction vehicles which will instead use the two new junctions at Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road.

The temporary nature of the access road will mean that any impact on the local highway network will be for a limited time period. Once the Spine Road is completed, the temporary access road would be closed to all vehicular traffic and would be down-graded to a pedestrian/cycle link only instead. This will need to be captured in the legal agreement (s106). It is proposed that the temporary access road will be closed to vehicular traffic at the earlier of the following:

- (a) The Spine Road being completed and open to traffic; or
- (b) Five years from when the temporary access road is constructed and first used.

Allowing the temporary access to be provided in this location will minimise any interaction between the phase 1 housing development and the construction of the spine road and as a result speeds up the delivery of the Spine Road. This is due to the traffic associated with Phase 1 not having to use the Spine Road for access. The completion of the spine road will reduce the vehicle trips on Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road by 500 trips in the am and 400 in the pm peak. The temporary nature of the access road will mean that any impact on the local highway network will be for a limited time period. The proposed link road would be down-graded to a pedestrian/cycle link once the spine road is completed and this will need to be captured in the legal agreement (s106). The completion of the spine road will reduce the vehicle trips on Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road by 500 trips in the am and 400 in the pm peak. It should be noted that the

Highway Authority has no objection in principle with this connection (for the temporary period as proposed).

The proposed use of Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane as a means of providing access to the new development until the proposed Spine Road had been constructed was one particular issue the which the Council (Executive) did not feel able to support when it considered the masterplan. However, given the high cost of the provision of the spine road, the need to fund this with some income from house sales, the fact that the western application has to start in the east (because its western portion has open space, flood attenuation and Rag Hill), and the temporary nature of the proposal which can be guaranteed through the legal agreement, officers do not consider this unreasonable. It is also important to note that the, and the Highway Authority at the County are supporting this approach. This approach will need to be mitigated with traffic management measures along Manor Road which will be guaranteed through the s106, and through a condition requiring the provision of a Construction Environmental Management Plan. If all this is achieved, then it is considered that the terms of this policy requirement will not be infringed.

It should be noted here that if the Council is successful with its current bids for funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (see relevant later section of this report), then it is intended that the money would be used to forward fund the spine road and the proposed temporary access off Corkscrew Lane would not therefore be required.

- Design and travel planning measures to achieve a significant shift to more sustainable forms of transport including, within residential areas, a maximum 20mph design speed and shared surface streets;  
This will be referred to in the Legal Agreement under s106 and via conditions, but is basically a matter that will be sorted out after any outline consent has been granted.
- Provision of connected streets designed to be suitable for cycling and walking and, where appropriate, additional measures to ensure that cycling and walking are safe and attractive means of transport;  
The Masterplan and the submitted documentation outlines design principles in line with the policy requirement. This will be a matter for consideration at the reserved matters stage, but it is noted that there are no objections to the proposal at this stage from either the Highway Authority (subject to conditions and further negotiations) or the County Rights of Way Officer.
- Good cycle connections to existing cycle routes, in particular towards the town centre via Gipsy Lane, Clifford Avenue/The Uppers, Bindon Road, and along the route of the Northern Distributor Road;  
This is more relevant to the Staplegrove east application. Negotiations are in hand between the applicant, the Highway Authority and the Borough Council to try and ensure adequate provision that will be guaranteed through any legal agreement. The exact detail and design of such schemes will come at the reserved matters stage.

- Provision of direct and safe walking routes to access existing bus services on the A358 and Kingston Road, and allowance for future provision of new local bus services within the development;

The Masterplan and the submitted documentation outlines design principles in line with the policy requirement. This is being pursued through the s106 negotiations and so will be guaranteed as a matter for consideration at the reserved matters stage. It is currently noted that there are no objections to the proposal at this stage from either the Highway Authority (subject to conditions and further negotiations) or the County Rights of Way Officer.

- Sensitive incorporation of the route of the West Deane Way;

This is more of a matter for the Staplegrove west application rather than this east application. The principles required here will need to form part of a design and placemaking strategy and as such will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage. Appropriate conditions have been proposed to guarantee consideration of this requirement and it is sufficient to note at this stage that this will need to be achieved at the appropriate time.

- Protection of the Rag Hill special landscape feature by not allowing built development to break the skyline;

This is more of a matter for the Staplegrove west application rather than this east application. The principles required here will need to form part of a design and placemaking strategy and as such will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage. Appropriate conditions have been proposed to guarantee consideration of this requirement and it is sufficient to note at this stage that this will need to be achieved at the appropriate time.

- Off-site woodland planting in accordance with the Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment to mitigate the impact of the development on Lesser Horseshoe bats. Timelines for delivery of the offsite woodland are to be agreed between the Council, County Ecologist and site promoters and should be delivered at the earliest opportunity;

Proposals to guarantee this have been submitted by the applicants. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives.

The County Ecologist has prepared two separate 'Tests of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), one for each of the Staplegrove applications, under a Service Level Agreement with TDBC. These were then sent to Natural England for their comments. The mitigation for both applications has been dealt with as a cohesive whole and no issues have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements.

Following the new information provided under a Regulation 22 submission in December 2016, the County Ecologist commented further that he had reviewed the updated ecology material and considered that no update to the Habitats Regulations Assessment was needed.

This was all sent to Natural England who has agreed with the conclusions in the HRA and supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. Subject to these conditions being met, it is considered that this element of policy requirement will have been satisfied.

- Landscape buffers and planting belts, including a belt along the outer edges of the development areas, facing bat activity from Hestercombe SAC;

The landscaping buffers and planting belts required are indicated in the submission. The need for suitable trees within the housing areas will be covered by detailed landscaping plans that will be required for the reserved matters stage. This is all discussed in the landscaping section of this report. In terms of the needs to protect existing bat activity, the comments given above (regarding off-site planting) also apply here.

- Provision of public access to enhanced parkland south of the former Pyrland Hall;

This will be a matter that will need to be negotiated and ensured at the Reserved matters stage.

- Detailed flood risk assessment will need to be undertaken and identify the strategic SUDs infrastructure required;

This has been undertaken and been the subject of negotiations. The Environment Agency have now withdrawn an initial objection to the proposals. The Lead Local Flood Authority (at Somerset County Council) now has no objection subject to standard drainage conditions. These have been incorporated into the recommendation.

- A Heritage Conservation Strategy. This strategy will identify heritage assets potentially susceptible to impact (including Grade II\* listed Yarde Farnhouse, Grade II\* listed Pyrland Hall, Grade II listed Okehills and the Staplegrove Conservation Area), their significance, settings, and where appropriate, proposed mitigation measures sufficient to avoid or minimise harm.

All of the aforementioned Listed Buildings are within the eastern application site boundary. In fact there are no listed buildings in the Staplegrove west site boundary. Heritage England are not now objecting, but do recommend a further review at the Reserved Matters stages. The Conservation officer has confirmed that in no case is the harm greater than 'less than substantial' and this can be reduced by mitigation measures [that would be considered at the Reserved Matters stages] and could be weighed against public benefits as described in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council produced a 'Statement of Common Ground on the Historic Environment' with



Historic England and the two Site Promoters (west and east). This was compiled in November 2015 as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan DPD examination. The submission is broadly in alignment with this 'Statement'. This policy requirement is therefore considered to be met.

- Detailed design codes prepared for individual areas within the development.

This will need to be addressed in any Reserved Matters application and is covered at this stage by suitably worded conditions.

It can be seen from the above list, that the proposed application either meets all of the criteria required by policy TAU2 of the SADMP or is capable of meeting them. Given that the document is now adopted, maximum weight should be applied to this policies and its site allocation in the plan.

(f) The Masterplan/masterplanning issues.

It is worth noting at this stage that The Council (Full Council) resolved on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015 that the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief be agreed as the basis for development, with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the junction between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; and the alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application.

It was also agreed that officers should write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-

- (i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;
- (ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists;
- (iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;
- (iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;
- (v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development;
- (vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
- (vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;
- (viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;

(ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and

(x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

The Council did write to the Site Promoters and made these points clear. The current submission is in accordance with these points in so far as they are relevant to this outline application with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale being Reserved Matters.

There was clearly a significant process leading up to the Council's decision to agree the masterplan and therefore it is considered that the applicant has undertaken due and appropriate process in order to discharge the requirements of masterplanning the proposal. Officers are of the opinion that the outline planning application submission together with the agreed masterplan provides an appropriate level of detail and information to enable the development to be properly considered in the light of relevant policies and guidance, site constraints and opportunities; and also ensures that a high quality development of the allocated site could be delivered through incorporation of relevant parts of the application documents into an outline planning permission. As such, it is considered that the submitted application proposal and material meets the following objectives:

- Delivery of the project vision;
- Compliance with Core Strategy policies in term of use, general quantum of development, key characteristics and design, including sustainable design;
- Delivery of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to development, particularly in relation to phasing and delivery of infrastructure; and
- Inclusion of a suite of plans and documents that provide an appropriate level of detail and information to enable the development to be properly considered in the light of relevant policies and guidance, site constraints and opportunities

Officers are now satisfied that there are no significant masterplanning issues that have not or will not be appropriately addressed. There will be a need for some three dimensional testing and fixing of masterplan components prior to the submission of Reserved Matters applications, which should then be incorporated into framework plans and site wide design guide and appearance palettes. These can be delivered through appropriate conditions.

(g) Neighbourhood Plans.

There are no adopted, draft or proposed Neighbourhood Plans whose area of jurisdiction covers this development proposal site, or that sit in close proximity to its boundary.

(h) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), March 2017

The 2017 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), has identified the urban extension at Staplegrove east as being capable of delivering 915 new homes (current application site) and 713 new homes on the western site, making a total of 1628 being capable of being delivered during the plan period. However, it is important to note that these figures are based on the two currently submitted

planning applications and are not based on the policy requirements given in the Core Strategy and the SADMP. They therefore relate to the 5 year housing land supply calculations only and do not supersede the policy requirement. Whether or not the site can actually take the number referred to in the SHLAA will be determined through the consideration of the planning application with reference to the adopted policy. The figures given in the SHLAA are important in as much as they form part of the calculations that demonstrate a five year supply of housing sites within the Council's area. It is clear that the north Taunton Urban Extension is an important and integral part of the Council's housing supply figures and without all of the proposed new homes coming forward at the application site, the Council could be at risk of falling short of delivering the minimum target of 17,000 new homes before 2028.

(i) Principle of the development.

The above discussions of the relevant planning policy documents shows that the principle of the development of a mixed use urban extension in the form of 'new sustainable neighbourhoods' with a phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes is a long standing commitment by the Council and has been established through adopted planning policy, particularly by Core Strategy, policy SS 6 and SADMP, policy TAU2. The location for the application has been endorsed, based on a number of assessments, by the Taunton Strategic Urban Extensions Study. The application site now forms part of the location of the urban extension identified in the Adopted Site Allocation and Development Management Plan, which now carries maximum weight as a planning consideration due to it having been adopted only last December (2016). Furthermore, the proposed development would achieve the aspiration of adopted Core Strategy policy SS 6 for a comprehensive masterplanned development which delivers the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure and avoids piecemeal development. It also meets the requirements of policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, which proposes 'new sustainable neighbourhoods at Staplegrove', with a phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes. The principle of development of the site for a mixed use urban extension must therefore be considered to be in accordance with adopted policy and in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, "***should be approved without delay***".

**Community Engagement**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. In this instance, the applicants have undertaken a consultation process with local residents, the Local Planning Authority and a range of local stakeholders including Parish Councils, the Local Education Authority, Chambers of Trade and local employers and community organisations. The applicant has undertaken this consultation process over several years and has included formal public consultation exercises including exhibitions and written feedback, ongoing liaison and meetings with Council officers, statutory consultees and other local stakeholders, project website, newsletters delivered to the local community and advertising in the local press.

It is apparent that the proposals for Staplegrove east have been informed by a lengthy and detailed period of both public and stakeholder consultation underpinned

by engagement with the community, the Local Planning Authority and other stakeholders. A number of meetings and events have taken place during the pre-application period and the feedback has been used to make improvements to the masterplan. It is therefore considered that the applicant has discharged their responsibility in respect of community involvement and engagement.

### **Highways and transportation (incl. access, public transport and travel plan)**

#### **(a) Site analysis and the existing situation.**

The Staplegrove east application Site lies to the north of Corkscrew Lane, approximately 2.5km northwest of Taunton Town Centre. The main body of the Application Site is bounded by Dodhill Road in the north; the parkland of Pyrland Estate (now partly owned and managed by Kings Hall School) to the east; winding lanes including Hope Corner Lane and Corkscrew Lane to the south; and in part a public footpath to the west (Manor Road to Smoky Farm PROW T24-15). Kingston Road traverses the eastern area of the Application Site, running in a broadly north-south alignment. Whitmore Lane traverses the western area, also following a broadly north-south alignment. Kingston Road dissects the eastern third of the parcel, with Whitmore Lane dividing the land to the west. The remainder of the land is privately owned and is not accessible to the public. Manor Road connects with the A358 Staplegrove Road via a signalised junction. It provides frontage access to a number of dwellings as well as a route to Staplegrove Sports Club, Village World (furniture showroom) and a through-route to Whitmore Lane and Kingston Road to the east.

Taunton Railway Station is situated circa 2.5km to the south east of the site and is accessible from the site by the 25 and 28 bus services which also serve Taunton Town Centre. These are currently operated by First.

#### **(b) The points of entry into the new community.**

The main vehicular accesses into the site are not reserved matters and will therefore obtain full planning permission with any approval granted to this outline application. This has been done in this way because it is a fundamental consideration with the proposal and will enable early access onto the site so that the phases of development can be planned and begun. This section will consider the planning merits of the proposed new points of entry into the urban extension. The technical highway considerations of these junctions will be considered at the appropriate point below.

Vehicular access is proposed into the new community at 2 key points across the development. Firstly, a new access is proposed off the existing A358 Staplegrove Road. This involves converting the existing Silk Mills roundabout to a signalised 'T' junction and linking it to a new signalised 'T' junction slightly further to the east on Staplegrove Road. This was chosen as the preferred access option because the junction arrangement was found to provide the most capacity resolving existing congestion issues at the Silk Mills Roundabout junction whilst providing safe crossing facilities for pedestrians. Other options were considered, namely

- The existing Silk Mills Roundabout being redesigned and increased in size to accommodate more traffic with a proposed signalised access junction to the site east of the abattoir; and

- The addition of a fourth arm onto the Silk Mills Roundabout which would provide direct access into the site. This option has since been discounted due to constraints to the south of the roundabout and the fact that this option would require the provision of a large roundabout that would be disproportionate in scale to the majority of other junctions in Taunton.

Secondly, a new access is proposed in the east of the new community where the proposed spine road meets Kingston Road. As originally submitted, this was modelled to be a four armed roundabout. This was proposed as a result of pre-application discussions between the applicants for both Staplegrove proposals (West and East) and the County Highway Authority. However, in its submitted form, officers had reservations about the size of the junction and its perceived land take. Concerns were simultaneously expressed by the Quantocks AONB Service in terms of its size, visibility from the AONB and its general impact upon this important gateway to the AONB. As a result of this negotiations took place to explore whether any different forms of junction could alleviate or mitigate the perceived environmental concerns with the roundabout. The only alternative acceptable to the Highway Authority was a traditional 4 armed junction in the form of crossroads. This would need to be signalised due to the modelled traffic flows and degree of conflicting movements that would arise. It transpired that a signalised cross-road junction had a very similar land take to that of the originally proposed roundabout, primarily because of the holding lanes that would be required and the amount of land that would need to be provided as visibility splays. Therefore, there is little to choose between the two in environmental impact terms. Officers formed the opinion that the signalised cross-roads option would be preferable because this was in keeping with the other junctions out of Taunton along the Kingston Road/Taunton Road highway, and indeed other junctions on other routes into and out of Taunton.

Concern has been expressed that the new junction will sit too close to Okehills (a grade II listed building) and will result in the loss of too many existing trees many of which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. The reason for the submitted position of this junction is as follows. Members will recall from their consideration of the Masterplan towards the end of 2015 that they wanted the access into the urban extension off Kingston Road/Taunton Road to be further south than originally indicated by the Site Promoters. This was primarily to reduce its impact upon the AONB. The current position was chosen because it was considered to have least (albeit some) environmental impact.

There are three main reasons for the now proposed location of the junction with Kingston Road. Firstly, there is a known population of Dormice that are present along the edges of Kingston Road and its adjoining hedgerows. If the junction was to be located further north, then the population of Dormice left in the hedgerows to the South would become isolated and die due to the lack of food source. Members will be aware that dormice are an internationally protected species. The President of the mammals Society, the County Ecologist (acting under agreement for the Borough Council) and the applicants own ecologist have been out to site and agreed a strategy for the Dormice. As submitted, there are suitable hedgerow runs to allow the dormice to move away from the Kingston Road edges of their own accord, so they will not have to be translocated as part of this element of the proposal. It is

true that the adopted SADMP policy TAU2 stipulates (bullet point 3) that the proposal should include – “A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road” and the masterplan agreed by Full Council (December 2015) does show a site to the north-west of the intersection. However, when the reserved matters are considered, it will be possible to design a scheme that retained a ‘favourable conservation status’ for the dormice, by means of a small green wedge or parcel of land free from development. The local centre is to be accessed internally from the new community and not directly off Kingston Road, so there is no need for development to encroach into any dormice zone. So, it cannot be concluded that the Local Centre will be the cause of them having to move. The current applications are in outline only and the location, extent, form and design of the Local Centre is not being considered at this stage. Most crucially, the position of the Local Centre is not being set by this particular application in any event. So it could actually be anywhere, in any form. This will be a Reserved Matter.

Secondly, Officers of both the Borough Council and the AONB Service wish to keep any lit junction arrangements as far South as possible so that the impact of the views from the Quantock Hills are kept to a minimum and so that any potential light pollution is minimised.

Thirdly, it was felt important to minimise the visual impact on the views from Pyrland Hall (a grade II\* listed building). Locating a junction further north, such as opposite the playing pitches would substantially harm and impact on the views.

The extent to which trees will be lost with the junction in this location is one which the Council’s Tree Officer has agonised about. However, his conclusion is that, although the loss of any tree is regrettable, with suitable replacement planting and strong landscaping schemes, he understands the importance of the provision of the urban extension and does not wish to object to this junction as now proposed.

The County Highway Authority have examined and tested the proposed signalised junction and are satisfied that it works with minimal interference to the free flow of traffic and is a sensible solution to the need for a junction at this point.

Therefore, for all of these reasons, Members are asked to approve the provision of a signalised junction at the point now indicated with the submission.

(c) The Environmental Statement - Transport and access.

The Transport and Access chapter of the Environmental Statement contains an assessment of the likely significant effects of the proposed development in relation to traffic and access. The Transport and Access chapter is supported by a Transportation Assessment and Travel Plan. As part of the assessment, future forecasted traffic levels have been considered, including flows from cumulative developments. A package of measures has been proposed to mitigate any adverse effects including Travel Plans, new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes and improvements to bus stops. Both Highways England and the Highway Authority have reviewed the original and revised submissions and considered the overall benefits and dis-benefits of this proposal. On balance they recommend that there is no highway reason why permission could not be granted, Highways England have recommended ‘no objection’ subject to condition and the County Highway Authority

is recommending no objection, subject to the S106 obligations and suggested conditions being provided.

(d) Amendments to the Transport proposals

Following lengthy negotiations and discussions about the impact of the transport proposals, changes were made to the transport section of the Environmental Statement. These changes reflect the considered opinions of officers at both the County Highway Authority and the Borough Council. The changes made to the proposals (from that originally submitted) can be summarised as follows -

- The Kingston Road roundabout, which connected the Spine Road to Taunton Road has now been removed and replaced with a signalised junction (change affecting both Staplegrove West and East applications).
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, north of Clifford Avenue, has now been removed and replaced with a cycle only access (change affecting Staplegrove East application).
- The addition of a vehicular connection road from the Spine Road to a proposed residential parcel of land north of Corkscrew Lane. The gap through the existing belt of trees between the Mill Lease Stream and Okehills is proposed to be increased in width to add vehicular means of access (to the previously proposed cycle footway,) from the Spine Road to the north into the southern area of proposed development adjacent to Corkscrew Lane and Okehills.
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, south of the green wedge, has now been removed.

These changes are considered to improve the operation of the proposals in highways terms considerably and they also reflect concerns expressed by local residents. The following analysis of the transport proposals is therefore based on these amended highways proposals.

(e) Traffic Impact

From the outset, it must be noted that it is the view of the County Highway Authority (at Somerset County Council) that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to certain highway mitigation being secured through the s106 process. These measures will be considered below. The Highway Authority is clear that if any of these measures are not able to be secured, the impact on the Highway Network is likely to be severe as described in the NPPF and would be recommended for refusal. However, with these measures, the Highway Authority does not object. There are also a number of points with regard to detail that will require addressing at the reserved matters stage (if the outline consent is granted) but none of these would prevent the outline proposals from being positively considered in highways terms. In general, the Transport Assessment (T.A.) demonstrates that the development either offers a tangible benefit to the 2028 “without development” scenario (such as at the Silk Mills junction and at the Manor Road signals) or an impact that cannot be considered ‘severe’ when related to the NPPF (such as at the Cross Keys Roundabout and at the Bindon Road signals junction). There are no junctions where the traffic impact would be considered to be significant or severe such that refusal of the proposal should be the only option, (so long as all of the mitigation works are carried through).

Firstly, there are a number of on-site (development Specific) highway proposals that are proposed by the application. Most of these proposals are common to both of

the Staplegrove applications (west and East). They are considered to be acceptable by the Highway Authority. They are as follows -

- Site Access at Staplegrove West in the form of a signalised junction;
- Site Access at Staplegrove East,
- Development of a spine road linking Staplegrove Road with Taunton Road/Kingston Road);
- Temporary access (restricted movement) arrangement at Manor Road, and longer term pedestrian and cycling access only;
- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular short cuts

There are also a number of offsite mitigation measures necessary to make the proposed development acceptable to the Highway Authority. These are common to both applications and will be secured through the legal agreement under s106 of the Act. These are as follows -

- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site, providing greater connectivity towards Taunton;
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement);
- Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction Signalisation;
- Improvements to capacity and layout at the Kingston Road Gyratory (the complex junction of Kingston Road, Cheddon Road, Greenway Road, Station Road, Priorswood Road and Station Approach);
- Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signals (no physical mitigation is proposed but spine road delivery and linking of the site access to this junction by SCOOT or similar is essential); and
- Travel planning measures, to include but not limited to - bus services / stops and if required improvements; parking, for bikes, motorcycles and vehicles; and travel plan packs and incentives.

The Highway Authority has recognised that there will be other locations affected by the development proposals, but they do not consider that it would be reasonable to require mitigation under s106. These are Bindon Road/Staplegrove Road priority Junction and Staplegrove Road/Greenway Road Mini roundabout. As these junctions cannot be proven to be directly and adversely affected by the proposals, in law, any required improvements would need to be funded through CIL money or from other resources.

Turning to the specific detail of new roads that will be required and junctions that will be impacted requiring improvements, the following points should be noted.

#### Access Junction West

This application (Staplegrove east) includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a Junction west of the development to Staplegrove Road is essential for this proposal. The West access junction will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrove Road between Manor Road and the existing Silk Mills roundabout. A second signal controlled junction is proposed to replace of the existing Silk Mills Roundabout. This will result in a right/left stagger arrangement which would be acceptable to the Highway Authority. As the proposed access junction into the urban extension will link into the Silk Mills



Junction (with SCOOT or similar), it is considered necessary to combine an improvement at Cross Keys to ensure that the network remains running. Without such an improvement in this location it is likely that the current delay and capacity constraint will be increased due to platooning of traffic from the proposed signalised junctions.

#### Access Junction East

This application includes a junction to Taunton Road/Kingston Road to the east of the proposed development. This is essential for this (and indeed both east and west) proposals. The form of the junction has been discussed above (section c) and it will be secured within the by s106 legal agreement. The Highway Authority consider that the amended proposed signalised cross-roads junction design is deliverable and will ensure that the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is paramount. Capacity is adequately catered for.

#### Spine Road

The development at North Taunton is predicated on the delivery of a Spine Road from Kingston Road on the east, across to a point close to Silk Mills roundabout on the west. This road will be of sufficient width to accommodate bus services and will have some development fronting onto it. The Spine Road will come forward as part of phase 1 of both developments and housing numbers will be restricted until such time as it is completed. The route of the Spine Road has been informed by significant due diligence and liaison with officers. A signalised crossroads junction is proposed at the junction of the Spine Road with Kingston Road/Taunton Road to the east and a traffic signal controlled junction is proposed at the junction of the Spine Road with A358 Staplegrove Road to the west in the vicinity of Silk Mills Roundabout. These proposed access junctions include pedestrian crossing facilities and have been developed following discussions with Somerset County Council as Local Highway Authority. With the Spine Road providing an east-west link, bus services will be able to operate through the development, putting all parts of it within a reasonable walking distance of the nearest bus stop. Continuation of new and improved bus services through neighbouring areas will benefit the wider community as well as serving the development.

The Spine Road is considered essential for both East and West developments and will be included within both s106 agreements to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety by either applicant. This will be set within the s106 by appropriate triggers. Currently the Spine Road is proposed to be delivered by the 326th dwelling, 0.5 ha of employment and a primary school at Staplegrove East, and 250 dwellings with regard to Staplegrove West, or within five years of the commencement of development (whichever comes first). At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) will be closed to vehicular traffic, as will the temporary access at Manor Road.

The County Highway Authority have seen, negotiated and commented upon a design for the spine road in order to ensure that such a road is appropriate and can be delivered. However, it is recognised by all parties that this road is not specifically being approved at this outline stage (except for the two junctions at either end, as described above) and this will be finalised and agreed at any Reserved Matters stage. Further detailed design work will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage. Consistency of the scheme, (as part is designed by the East applicant and part is designed by the West applicant) is considered essential to ensure a safe and sufficient piece of infrastructure is provided for all users (vehicles, and

non-motorised alike).

#### Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signalised Junction

The Manor Road / Staplegrove Road junction requires the delivery of the Spine Road (resulting in subsequent reduction in traffic at this junction) in order to operate within capacity in future years with this development. The Provision of SCOOT, or similar is also considered essential to manage the operation and movement along the network, linking with the other proposed Junctions, (West access and Silk Mills). This can all be guaranteed within the s106.

#### Temporary Access

The applicant for the Staplegrove west proposals has proposed a temporary access point from Manor Road (in the location of the existing Village World access). This is dealt with separately under the concurrent application. However, Members are again reminded that if the Council is successful with its current bids for funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (see relevant later section of this report), then it is intended that the money would be used to forward fund the spine road and the proposed temporary access off Corkscrew Lane would not therefore be required.

#### Corkscrew Lane / Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane Staggered Junction

It is noted within the T.A. and the subsequent Addendum, that this existing Junction requires a mitigation scheme in order to improve safety and visibility with the addition of the development. A further feasibility audit has been undertaken by the County, and the designer's responses considered. There are a number of elements that will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage with regard to the signalised proposal at this location, subject to consent, in order to ensure the proposal is appropriate and deliverable in terms of both safety and capacity. However, at this stage, it is appropriate to note that the Highway Authority consider that such a scheme is achievable and deliverable. Members are made aware that such a scheme is likely to impact upon the green space and trees at this location, in order to provide a safe and appropriate junction. However it has been determined that a scheme could be achieved without detriment or impact to the existing trees at this point which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.

#### Kingston Road Gyratory

The Kingston Road Gyratory is modelled to operate above its practical reserve capacity in the AM peak period in all forecast scenarios and is above capacity in the PM by 2028. It is clear that the proposed developments (Staplegrove East and West) impact on this junction. The modelled scheme which provides a small benefit, is an improvement on the 'Do Nothing Scenario' but does not completely mitigate the impact. Therefore, a full scheme in this location will be required to be fully funded and delivered by the developers of the East and West and proposals and will need to be secured within Section 106 agreements for both applicants.

#### Pedestrian and Cycle access / improvements

A safe route from the proposed development sites to the Taunton Academy is considered essential for the proposed development. Details of this route will need to be provided as part of a reserved matters application and will be guaranteed through the s106 legal agreement. Improvements to the walking and cycling facilities at Gypsy Lane are also considered necessary in order to improve and encourage sustainable travel in line with Travel Plan proposals from the site.

#### Construction traffic

The proposed development is anticipated to be built over a period of 12 years with the spine road coming forward with the first phase of the development. During this time there will be a mixture of construction traffic and development related traffic. It is envisaged that the proposed spine road will facilitate construction traffic during the development build out to reduce the impact on the existing road network. Construction traffic will make up a progressively lower proportion of the overall traffic volume as the application site is developed.

There would be increased volumes of traffic on the local highway network within Taunton and the surrounding area associated with construction traffic as workers travel to and from the application site each day along with the movement of material by HGV's. However, the changes due to construction traffic would be relatively low in comparison to existing traffic flows and the HGVs will be required to adhere to routing agreements avoiding inappropriate routes through villages. It is expected that the most intensive part of construction would occur at the time as the construction of the spine road. As such, overall it is considered that the significance of the impact would be a temporary minor impact on road users due to the construction of the spine road but minor adverse impact on road users during the build out of the housing.

#### Conclusions to 'traffic impact'.

It is clear that without the mitigation that has been proposed then the impact would be considered to be severe in terms of section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is recognised that the impact at some junctions can be offset if the proposed mitigation schemes are implemented through a suitable agreement. With the mitigation measures that have been proposed and provided that the Highway Authority is satisfied that these can be secured and delivered, then on balance the proposal could be considered acceptable in traffic impact terms.

#### (f) Travel Plan.

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with this application and this has been subject to discussions between the applicant and the Highway Authority. The latest version has been audited by the Travel Plan Team at the Highway Authority. It should be noted that the TP will need to be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided.

There are a few elements within it that need addressing/further details. However, there are just a couple of areas that need further details:

- Further information is required regarding bus services and commitment i.e. aspiration of a free bus for year as mentioned in meeting with Highways.
- Safe routes to schools should be provided for the relevant primary and secondary schools.
- Improve off-site measures i.e. upgrade Gypsy Lane.
- Further details are required regarding the proposed management levy.
- Minor amendments that were not changed as requested from previous audit.

The Highway Authority considers that these are elements that can be discussed further when the s106 is being negotiated or at the reserved matters stage. Where Plans cross over 'East and West', an element of consistency is still required. It is

considered beneficial to have one Travel Plan Co-ordinator (TPC) for both sites. Somerset County Council has offered to act as TPC for both Staplegrove developments. In principal subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove east Travel Plan is considered to be close to approval subject to final amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106.

(g) Impact on the motorway.

This is covered by comments made on the proposal from Highways England, the Central Government agency that has responsibility for Motorways and trunk roads. It will be noted from their comments (above) that Highways England (H.E.) originally placed a holding objection on this application, meaning that in line with the statutory powers of H.E., the Borough Council could not determine the application in a positive manner until this holding objection was removed. H.E.'s concerns related to the capacity of junction 25 of the motorway to cope with additional traffic that was likely to be generated by this scheme and using this junction. Following amendments to, and a re-run of, the computerised traffic model, H.E. is now satisfied that this proposal will not have adverse impacts upon the junction. As such, they have now made a recommendation of no objection, subject to conditions in the case of the Staplegrove east application, and the Borough Council is permitted to determine the application.

(h) Conclusions to the highways issues.

To conclude, it is recognised that the proposal will result in a significant increase in vehicle movements on the highway network. However the TA and addendum has shown that if all the mitigation measures which are proposed are secured and delivered, then the impact is unlikely to be considered to be severe as set out in section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the impact of the development can therefore be considered acceptable. The Highway Authority is satisfied that the principles of the TP can be considered to be acceptable at this stage, although it should be noted that negotiations are on-going and will need to be secured via the S106. Regarding the principal accesses into the urban extension, the two points of access proposed onto Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road/Taunton Road are considered to be acceptable in principle although it should be noted that these would need to be secured via a S106 and also subject to a full safety and technical audit. Based on the information set out in the TA, it is the Highway Authority's view that the delivery of the mitigation measures is essential to the acceptability of the application and as such should be secured and delivered by appropriate measures and will be subject to full safety and technical audits. In terms of the internal layout of the site, including the exact position and alignment of the spine (link) road, these are matters that will appropriately be considered at the detailed/reserved matters stage(s). It should be noted that the Highway Authority has had discussions in regards to the spine road link through the site and they are satisfied that the general principle of the link road is acceptable.

On the basis of the above, both the Highway Authority and Highways England raise no objection to this proposal subject to conditions and legal agreements as specified. Refusal on traffic or transportation grounds could not therefore be justified, so long as the suggested conditions are incorporated into any approval and so long as the required off-site measures can be secured (through a legal agreement).

## **Landscaping and visual amenity considerations.**

### **(a) Landscape introduction and policy position.**

The planning application is accompanied by a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment which has informed the Landscape and Visual Amenity chapter of the Environmental Statement.

The starting point for investigation of the landscaping impacts of this proposal has to be the policy position. Nationally, this is covered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012. Particularly relevant is section 7 (Requiring Good Design), in which para. 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments - *“respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation”* and *“are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping”*; and section 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment), in which para. 109 states that *“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”*.

At a more local level, policy CP8 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (September 2012) is relevant because it states that *“The Borough Council will conserve and enhance the natural historic environment, and will not permit development proposals that would harm these interests of the settings of the towns and rural centres unless other material factors are sufficient to override their importance”*.

More recently, the Council has adopted its ‘Site Allocation and Development Management Plan’ [SADMP], in which a number of policies are relevant. Policy ENV1 (Protection of trees, woodland, orchards and hedgerows) maintains that – *“Development should seek to minimise impact on trees, woodlands, orchards, historic parklands and hedgerows of value to the area’s landscape, character or wildlife and seek to provide net gain where possible. Where the loss is unavoidable..... adequate provision must be made to compensate for this loss”*. Policy ENV2 (Tree planting within new developments) states that *“The planting of trees within new developments shall be sought where this would benefit wildlife and biodiversity, enhance landscape or public amenity. Trees should be planted in (A) communal areas and along streets or/and between buildings; and (B) On highway verges (depending on safety issues and reasonable cost of future maintenance). Development proposals should where possible provide a broad mix of native and non-native trees”*. Policy ENV3 (Special Landscape Features) maintains that *“Development which would significantly harm the appearance, character and contribution of landscape quality within Special Landscape Features will not be permitted unless appropriate mitigation measure would reduce such harm to an acceptable level”*. This is especially important with this concurrent application at Staplegrove west, as the Rag Hill Special Landscape Feature runs along the site’s northern boundary and through its western end. Policy D1 (Taunton’s skyline) states that *“Development which would detract from the distinctive character and attractiveness of Taunton’s skyline will not be permitted”*. Policy D2 (Approach routes to Taunton and Wellington) requires that *“Development which would harm the visual qualities of routes into and out of Taunton and Wellington will not be permitted”*. Policy TAU2 (Staplegrove) is also relevant to the landscape assessment in a more general sense, but specifically the following bullet points which make clear that any proposal for development at Staplegrove must be accompanied by a masterplan and phasing strategy should to include (amongst

other requirements) -

- An extension of the Green Wedge on either side of Mill Lease Stream, between Corkscrew Lane and the open countryside north of the existing 132kV power lines;
- Multi-functional green space (including allotments, children's play, playing fields, recreational areas, amenity space) in line with the relevant standards;
- sensitive incorporation of the West Deane Way;
- Protection of Rag Hill special landscape feature by not allowing built development to break the skyline; and
- Landscape buffers and planting belts, including a belt along the outer edges of the development area, facing bat activity from Hestercombe.

(b) Landscape evaluation and attributes of the application site.

Taunton and the Application Site sit within National Landscape Character Area 146 – Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes, as designated within Natural England's National Character Areas document. Taunton lies towards the south of this large character area that spans from the Somerset Coast in the north to the Blackdown Hills in the south. This assessment characterises large areas in a 'broad brush' manner as it inevitably has to when looking at such matters on a national scale. To that end it is of limited value to this assessment. However, amongst its 'key characteristics' which may be considered pertinent to the application site and its surroundings are the following identified characteristics -

- Woodland cover is generally low, at 6 per cent, although the area has a wooded feel as there are many hedgerow trees (such as oak), orchards, remnants of parkland, small woodlands with ash and oak and bankside trees such as alder.
- Lowland mixed farming landscape, with dense hedgerows enclosing rectilinear fields.
- Permanent grassland characterises the floodplain with arable, pasture, market gardening and orchards in the vales and pasture and arable on more undulating land.
- Scattered settlements of farmstead, hamlets and villages linked by sunken winding lanes.

The Borough Council has commissioned two of its own local landscape character assessments which are considerably more detailed and because of their scale are considered more relevant to this assessment. These are the Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment (2011) and the Landscape Character Assessment of Taunton's Rural-Urban Fringe – Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2005. These documents give descriptions of the characteristics of the site as they were recorded at the time of the studies.

More relevant though is the site as it currently is today. The Application Site covers an area of approximately 79.96 hectares including 69.08 hectares of land proposed for the Staplegrove East development and 10.88 hectares for the section of Spine Road that lies to the west of Staplegrove East. The Application Site is located on agricultural land comprising irregularly shaped and sized fields that are generally enclosed by mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees and woodland. The landform of the application site generally falls from east to west from a high point of approximately 46 metres above Ordnance datum (AOD) adjacent to Kingston Road in the North East to 40 metres AOD on land between Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Lane. The northern most part of the Application Site (the proposed Bat mitigation

tree belts) lies approximately 1.5km to the south of the Quantock Hills AONB at its nearest point.

There are a many mature trees on site, a number of which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). All trees and hedgerows found within the application site make an important contribution to its character and the site supports a strong and consistent small to medium scale field pattern bounded by a strong network of hedgerows.

(c) Findings of the Landscape and visual impact Assessment.

The landscape and visual impact assessment submitted with the application concludes that, while the Proposed Development would have significant effects on the landscape character of the application Site itself, it would not significantly alter the character of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, it argues that those effects would reduce quickly with distance (from the site) so that the overall effects on landscape character areas would not be significant. In relation to designated landscapes, it is acknowledged that the development would be visible (at some distance) from the Quantock hills AONB. However, it is not considered that the impact is great enough to justify an objection on landscaping grounds.

The assessment did find that specific localised landscape areas directly adjacent to or surrounded by areas of the proposed development site, would experience significant (adverse) landscape effects in both construction and operation phases. This is when the proposed planting areas and green infrastructure would be new and establishing and the construction activity would be prevalent and at times widespread. However, over time, with the completion of construction activity and the maturing of the extensive areas of green open space infrastructure, these effects would moderate, and in most cases become not significant.

In general terms the areas with closest proximity to the development site are judged to experience the greatest level of visual effect which in many cases is permanent and locally considered to give rise to significant (adverse) visual effects, particularly during construction phases and before planting establishes. The residential hamlet at Whitmore Lane and those living along Corkscrew Lane in the north of the Whitmore area would experience the greatest magnitude of change because they would be all but surrounded by the various forms of the proposed development, either green wedge or Spine Road related development and activity. Such changes in the immediate surrounding context would be expected to give rise to significant (adverse) landscape effects due to the significant change in the character of the surrounding landscape character to what would be predominantly a developed green wedge character with housing and built form surrounding, albeit that the effect would be moderated over time with the maturing tree and green open space infrastructure planting. The Assessment considered that these significant effects would not extend to the wider area.

People making use of the public rights of way which traverse the development site would also experience significant long term adverse effects

The Assessment found that landscape effects on the landscape character areas outside of the development boundary would be limited by a combination of distance, scale, mass height and form of the development. The landscape mitigation proposed in the form of comprehensive green infrastructure and open space

provision greatly assisted in reducing the potential adverse landscape and visual impact. Many of these incorporate and retain existing and valued features of the receiving landscape such as trees and hedgebanks to assist in the integration of the proposed development. The Assessment found no significant adverse effects of the visual amenity of receptors within the wider area or within the Quantock Hills AONB (or those viewers within it). None of the representative viewpoints from within the Quantock Hills AONB and adjacent foothills were assessed to experience more than minor (adverse) level of visual effects with the viewers visiting Cothelstone Hill public viewpoint experiencing a neutral level of visual effects.

(d) Relationship with the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies approximately 1.5km to the northern most part of the application site (the bat mitigation planting) although the built form of the proposed development is much further away than this. The Blackdown Hills AONB lies approximately 8km to the south on the other side of the town of Taunton. There is no doubt that the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. This is enshrined within the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-2019. The development currently proposed is not within the boundaries of the AONB, nor is it immediately adjacent. The nearest parts of the AONB boundary and the edge of the proposed urban extension will be some 2 kilometres apart for the eastern proposal and where the spine road is proposed to join Kingston Road/Taunton Road. Therefore any impact upon the AONB is more likely to be in terms of views out from within its boundaries and potential for light pollution to the dark skies it enjoys at night.

One of the primary scenic viewpoints within the AONB is the lookout point on Cothelstone Hill. This is an area of access land which rises to an elevation of 332 metres AOD and enjoys good views over the town of Taunton and the rural Vale of Taunton beyond. From this location it would be possible to discern the proposed development immediately to the north of Taunton, although it would be seen at this distance in the context of the overall urban form of Taunton. The northern boundary planting has been programmed to be planted at Phase 1a, in order to maximise its screening potential as the site is developed. In the early years it would be possible to discern the new urban form from this location, but over time as the planting matured, the development would be increasingly softened and would act to assimilate the harder built form of Taunton into the softer Vale of Taunton beyond. The Proposed Development would very much be seen sitting well below the skyline and forming a small part of a wider panorama. This means that in terms of the potential for night time light pollution, something which is important to the AONB, the proposal would add little to that already experienced. The submitted LVIA concludes that the impact of the proposed new development at Staplegrove east would constitute a low ('minor') magnitude of effect in the long term which is not considered significant. Officers agree with this conclusion.

The Quantock Hills AONB has serious concerns regarding this planning application and they object to the proposals as submitted. Their comments are made in respect of potential adverse impact on the nationally protected landscape of the Quantock Hills AONB. The AONB Service have a number of specific concerns which are as follows –

- The scale of the urban extension reducing the transition between urban



environment and nationally protected landscape.

The Service makes clear that their primary concern is the juxtaposition of the Quantock Hills with the Vale of Taunton Deane is a very important perceptual relationship and that it is recognised in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment document. Their concerns are that the extent of the development will reduce the important physical and perceptual sense of separation between the urban edge of Taunton and entry into the protected landscape. They make the case that the proposed development will bring the urban area too far north into the landscape setting of the Quantock Hills.

Whilst it is accepted that this is an important consideration, it must also be remembered that the setting of the AONB is not protected. The designation of the site boundary has been debated and adopted through the local plan process and the AONB Service were party to consultation input into both the Core Strategy and the SADMP, both now adopted. Whilst the AONB Service have the right to make this point, it is considered that it would now be unwise to unpick the detail of the new urban edge which has been subject to detailed scrutiny at public examination.

- Urbanisation of Kingston Road

Kingston Road provides a rural approach into the protected landscape and is the main gateway into the Quantocks from Taunton. There is currently a subtle and comfortable shift from a hedge and oak lined road into the more suburban landscape around the Corkscrew Lane junction. The AONB Service are concerned that the highway proposals will dramatically change the character of this road. They were particularly concerned at the original proposal for a roundabout at the end of the spine road. This concern primarily prompted planning officers to negotiate a new form of junction and so we now have a cross roads proposed instead. However, this change does not much curtail the AONB Service's concerns over the loss of a number of standard oak trees in this local area. They believe that they should not be removed. The alternative to this however, would be to place the junction further to the north, avoiding the trees. This though would bring the junction closer to the AONB and so on balance is not considered to be a preferable option.

The Service also have concerns about the buildings shown around the proposed new junction. These are the local mixed use centre and employment uses. No detail has been included on their design because this will be a reserved matter. However, the concerns of the Service are noted and officers will ensure that the scale, design, height and appearance of these structures is such so as to minimise any impact on the AONB. In line with the wishes of the Service, there is no reason why the buildings could not be set back from the junction allowing a scheme of structural planting to be incorporated. Officers are recommending that the neighbourhood centre is the subject of a separate design guide, to be guaranteed by condition and approved in detail before any development on it occurs. This is in line with the Service's specified thinking and should help to allay any fears they may have in this regard.

- Views from the hills

The AONB Service makes the point that the photomontages demonstrate the development would be visible from the hills. However, the LVIA does judge the

impact to be minor-adverse or neutral. Of course a minor-adverse effect is still an adverse effect which would be contrary to the primary purpose and statutory duty of conserving and enhancing an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This point will need to be given careful thought when the reserved matters are being considered. Appropriate landscaping will be hugely important in mitigating any potential impact.

- Floodlighting

The AONB Service has concerns generally regarding the increase in lighting and the impact this may have on Quantock night views. They are also specifically concerned about the potential for the sports pitches at the northeast edge of the development to be floodlit. Any proposed floodlighting in this development can be managed through the design of the lighting and time restrictions on its use. Potential light spill and light pollution in general will need to be tested as part of any reserved matters submissions.

- Setting of Pyrland Hall

The AONB Service have expressed concern that there could be a change in the character of views looking out from the main house. Whilst sitting outside of the AONB boundary, it is fair to say that Pyrland Hall is typical of the large country house and estate landscapes that sit at the edge of the Quantock Hills and characterise the greater-Quantock landscape. This however is a matter that can only properly be dealt with at the reserved matter stage.

- Bat mitigation woodland buffer and adjacent agricultural land

The AONB Service query how the shape of the proposed bat mitigation woodland buffer has been determined, particularly as its rather geometric form (*their words*) does not appear to relate to the pattern of woodland in the surrounding landscape. This however has been designed in association with the County Council's ecologist (acting on behalf of the Borough Council) and subsequently agreed by Natural England. It is not therefore considered necessary to revisit this element of the proposal. Concern is further expressed that an area of agricultural land located between the bat mitigation woodlands and the proposed housing development could be promoted for further development in the future, bringing the urban environment even closer to the AONB. This is not the subject of the current application and would need to be considered on its own merits if it ever arose as a proposal.

- The undergrounding of the electricity pylons and overhead powerlines.

The Service notes and welcomes the plans to underground the electricity pylons within the development boundary. However, the question is also asked as to whether other pylons and lines outside of the development site (that are on the same power lines) could be undergrounded to further improve the appearance from the AONB. They suggest requesting an additional Section 106 contribution from the developer towards undertaking further undergrounding in association with the power companies and local landowners. Whilst this is an excellent suggestion, unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this application.

In conclusion to this topic, it is recognised that these are all fundamental considerations, and would affect consideration of the current proposal, whatever its size and its proposed layout of land uses. It is noted that the Full Council did not

make any specific references to the AONB when they considered and agreed the masterplan for Staplegrove. It is also noted that neither policy SS6 of the Core Strategy nor policy TAU2 of the SADMP make any specific reference to the AONB or the need to protect it from any aspects of the development. The SADMP is of course up to date and carries maximum weight having only been approved in December 2016. It is difficult therefore to know how best to deal with the concerns expressed by the AONB Service, because considerations of the spine road, its access onto Kingston Road and the need to underground the electricity pylons (necessitating terminal towers) has already been considered at public examination and has now been formally adopted as policy by the Council. Clearly the Council cannot now rewrite or re-interpret its adopted policy and the broad general requirements of the proposal as agreed in the masterplanning exercise must stand. It is also recognised that the potential for impact relates mainly to the views out from the AONB and potential additional traffic on nearby roads rather than any specific direct impact to facilities or uses within the AONB boundary itself. However, it is accepted that maximum effort should be taken to try and minimise any potential impact upon the AONB. This would really be a consideration more for the detailed and reserved matters stages of the urban extension process. So on balance, it is not considered that there is reasonable grounds for withholding consent to this outline proposal based upon potential impact to the AONB.

(e) Proposed green infrastructure of the application.

The Green Infrastructure network proposed by this application, incorporates a northward extension to the existing Green Wedge south of Corkscrew Lane, and is designed to have the following functional and aesthetic characteristics.

- Creating green public open spaces, incorporating play areas, playing pitches, walking and cycling;
- Retention and creation of landscape features for wildlife and visual amenity; individual trees, hedgerow, tree belts, wetlands and watercourses;
- Allowing space for the integration of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS);
- A planting buffer along the northern boundary to provide a robust visual screen to the northern edge which is identified as being visually sensitive in the 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) from the AONB towards Staplegrove.
- Re-creation of former orchards, providing opportunities for local food production on allotments;
- Affording opportunity for views to open green space;
- Providing gardens associated with housing layout;
- The creation of a network of north-south connections between Staplegrove and the open countryside to the north, integrating existing public rights of way; and
- Use of native plant species will be used where appropriate.

(f) The Green Wedge.

Green Wedges have been protected through policy in Taunton Deane since the East Taunton Local Plan publication of 1991. The policy wording has changed little during that time. Currently the policy states that the key policy objectives of Green Wedges are to:

- *Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods;*
- *Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents;*
- *Bring the countryside into the heart of town;*
- *Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play;*

- *Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat;*
- *Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity; and*
- *Provide a positive approach to land use.*

The Council has resolved that green wedges should be proposed to be delivered as an integral part of all of its urban extensions, where they will be expected to adopt Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards and contribute to the TDBC Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The existing Staplegrove Green Wedge is located to the south east of the application Site, between the communities of Staplegrove and Wellsprings. It should be noted that the existing Green Wedge is mainly given over to sports pitches, allotments and a sports centre. The Core Strategy identifies two development areas at Staplegrove separated by an extension to this existing green wedge to the north on either side of Mill Lease Stream (hence the west and east applications). The recently adopted SADMP identifies the proposed green wedge as stretching from Corkscrew Lane in the south to the open countryside north of the existing 132 kilovolt power lines. No reference is made in either policy document to its width. However, the Taunton Deane Green Wedge Assessment of June 2015 does identify a northern extension to the existing green wedge area in line with potential future development.

There is an expectation that the proposals that come forwards will follow the identified line for the Green Wedge extension. However, the applicants maintain that this line is indicative and therefore they proposed that the interface between the built form and the Green Wedge should be of a more organic nature.

Through the ensuing iteration of the Staplegrove Framework Plan for the combined east and west Staplegrove developments, the shape, extent, complementary land uses and edges of the green wedge became more defined. The design of the landscape layout and functionality of the extension to the green wedge now proposed takes into account the adjacent land uses and includes appropriate offsets and compatible land use buffers around adjacent land uses and in particular, the hamlet on Whitmore Lane. It includes substantial areas of open green space, native mixed species tree and hedge planting, footpath and cycleway networks, sustainable drainage ponds and space for equipped play and informal recreation. The primary school site playing fields and playground are also included.

The Green Wedge area in general is clearly visually sensitive and therefore it has been retained as open space within the agreed masterplan. The area which is proposed as future Green Wedge is currently rural in nature. The proposed Staplegrove west and east schemes extend the existing green wedge northwards both within and beyond the extension identified in TDBC's Green Wedge Assessment 2015 and Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) 2016. However, the extension proposed in the applications is narrower east to west. A boundary has been proposed which broadly follows the contours of the land. So although the proposed green wedge is narrower than envisaged, it does retain a similar area coverage to that envisaged. Officers do not consider that this is a significant departure.

As previously reference, neither core strategy policy SS6 nor SADMP policy TAU2 specify a size or dimension for the green wedge. The only reference to size is the very general indication given in the concept plan that accompanies policy TAU2, but even this is not an accurate reflection of the proposed boundary given in the Taunton

Deane Green Wedge Assessment document of June 2015. In policy terms there is no stated requirement for any subsequent planning application at Staplegrove to exactly follow the boundary line of the proposed extension. The only real test afforded by policy consideration is the seven key objectives for green wedges listed in the justification for policy CP8 of the Core Strategy. Does the current submission meet these criteria?

Objective 1 - Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods.

The proposals extend the existing green wedge to the north and prevent the east and west parts of the proposed developments from coalescing. Also by extending out to the application site boundary, the proposed green wedge prevents coalescing further to the north. This maintains openness and conserves the view out towards the Quantock Hills. Planting typical of the local landscape is proposed throughout the green wedge and a new native tree belt to the north is designed to integrate the urban development within the pattern of the existing field framework to integrate the edges of the development into the wider surrounding landscape and to provide ecological separation between the town and the foraging habitat of bats linked to the Hestercombe SAC.

Objective 2 - Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents

The green wedge has been designed to be inclusive and accessible and provides varying recreational activities and visual amenity. The boundary broadly extends from the existing built form out into the wider landscape which provides the opportunity for the development to be orientated towards the green wedge resulting in an active frontage and a sympathetic interface between the development and green wedge. This will maximise the benefit of the direct visual relationship between residential development and green open space, and also allows for passive surveillance of the open space which is likely to contribute to residents' sense of safety and willingness to use the space.

Objective 3 - Bring the countryside into the heart of town

The proposed green wedge extends northwards, so creating a continuous green infrastructure and open space link from the town to the open countryside. It has been designed to prevent built form development wrapping around it to the north, and so will maintain this physical and visual connection to the countryside. The applicant proposes that the landscape design throughout the green wedge will include open grassy space, native mixed species hedge and tree planting and watercourses and sustainable drainage features.

Objective 4 - Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play

The proposals provide formal and informal recreational opportunities including a connected network of cycle ways and footpaths, picnic benches, seating, space for organisations and community groups and allotments. The green wedge will also include extensions to strategic foot and cycle way network to and from the town centre and from east to west connecting the new and existing neighbourhoods. Most of this however, will be designed at the reserved matters stage.

Objective 5 - Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat

The green wedge provides a habitat link and foraging for birds, bats, dormice and insects amongst others. Planting design will aim to increase native species diversity and is connected to the new native tree belt proposed to the north east and north-west. Substantial areas of mixed native species planting of hedges and trees, sustainable drainage and wildlife ponds and water courses and areas with species rich grassland will enhance habitat provision and quality and will be suitable for many species. This can be guaranteed at the reserved matters stage.

Objective 6 - Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity

The proposed green wedge will provide well connected, publicly accessible green space with habitat links and foraging opportunities for birds, bats and insects. It will also be a resource for visual amenity, recreation and relaxation for the local community.

Objective 7 - Provide a positive approach to land use

The proposals provide a good approach to land use through the provision of visual amenity, the opportunity for passive surveillance, diverse recreational opportunities and habitat links and foraging opportunities. The proposals for use of the green wedge also provide multifunctional water management opportunities through integrated sustainable drainage features.

Therefore, on every objective, it is officer's view that the proposed green wedge meets the criteria specified and so there would be no reasonable ground for refusing to accept the proposed size (width) of the green wedge in policy terms. In fact there are two particular positive features that derive from the plans as proposed. Firstly, the applicants are keen to ensure that the alternative edge for the built form surrounding the green wedge is orientated inwards so that a more active frontage is achieved with a sympathetic interface between the development and the adjoining open space. Secondly, recent surveys have identified that the existing Green Wedge area to the south of Corkscrew Lane was not found to have key importance for protected species. The extension of the applicant's proposed boundary to the open countryside to the north provides the long term potential for improved connectivity to the existing green wedge and amenity land to the south particularly if that land were to be favourably managed for biodiversity through new hedges and tree planting and the creation of ponds.

In summary, the applicant has proposed an alternative boundary following detailed site-level appraisal and masterplanning which meets the Council's Green Wedge objectives and also contributes towards ecological enhancement. The proposed Green Wedge extension will successfully perform the 7 key policy objectives of the adopted Core Strategy. The Green Wedge land area, the edge interface arrangement and content of the proposed new Green Wedge, will, in combination with the existing, further enhance the overall policy objectives and functional quality of the Staplegrove Green Wedge. The small apparent reduction in width of the proposal, when compared to that proposed by TDBC in the Green Wedge Assessment 2015, has no material effect on its fulfilling these policy objectives. Ultimately Member are not being asked to approve the width or overall size of the green wedge with this outline application in any event, although there would be a presumption in favour of the size indicated with any approval when it came to the detailed and reserved matters. Officers are satisfied that the green wedge now indicated in the current submission is broadly in line with the agreed masterplan and would not be in conflict with any adopted policy. For these reasons, officers are not objecting to the proposal in this regard.

(g) Conclusions (on landscape and visual amenity issues).

The scheme has some less desirable (landscape) features such as -

- The development will impact on existing landscape features in the form of removal of some existing hedgerow and the felling of existing trees;
- Development will have an impact on Hestercombe House SAC, hence the need for extensive tree planting;
- New terminal towers for the undergrounding of the electricity cables will need to be installed (if the power lines are undergrounded);

- There will be some, but limited impact on the visual amenities experienced when viewing out of the AONB, particularly from the existing visitor attractions and scenic view points.
- The success of the landscape strategy will depend on landscape management and maintenance establishment of woodland buffer and SUDs features. There is no mention at this outline stage on who will maintain these, but this should be referenced in the s106 legal agreement.

However, the proposal has considerable advantages in landscape terms, which can be summarised as follows -

- The proposals meet the recommendations of the NPPF in that the functionality, quality and sustainability of the proposals have been considered.
- Core Strategy Policy CP8 and the SADMP have been well integrated into the proposals, particularly with reference to the Green Wedge proposals that create significant new public open space.
- The proposals build on the earlier masterplanning studies and include the majority of the recommendations from these.
- An 18 metre wide buffer of native planting would be introduced along the northern boundary to the application site. As well as providing an ecological corridor, this would help to soften and filter views of the development when viewed from the north and the AONB, easing the transition to the rural landscape with the density of development being decreased towards this.
- Many of the hedges and trees existing on the site will be maintained and incorporated into the development. This can be guaranteed through the landscaping reserved matters.
- Effects on the Quantock Hills AONB would be noticeable, with the built envelope of Taunton moving further north. However, Distance views of the development from the AONB will appear in context of the town, as the development will sit well below the skyline. With the extensive green infrastructure breaking up the site and the distance, this is not considered to be significant.
- Visual effects are assessed as reducing in significance at greater distance from the development with only some very close viewpoints experiencing change that could be described as significantly adverse. The mitigation proposals seek to reduce these and it is considered that they will be largely successful.
- In general a strong landscape strategy has been used to direct the development within the Masterplan area which will result in an attractive and cohesive development.
- The layout has been configured to retain and take advantage of existing lanes and footpaths as well as the mature trees that characterise the site.
- It is the Land Promoters intention that the development has been designed to overlook the Green Wedge, providing an attractive outlook as well as natural surveillance.
- The southernmost field adjacent to the Conservation Area is proposed as allotments and attenuation, to avoid locating built form in this area.
- The existing electricity lines are proposed to be undergrounded. This has clear environmental and visual benefits. It should be noted that this is still the subject of negotiations between the applicants and the owners of the power lines – Western Power Distribution.

However, for the most part these benefits, will only become realised once detailed negotiations take place on any reserved matters. At this outline stage, it is considered sufficient to note that the application could be delivered without significantly adverse, long term or irreversible impacts. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is considered to be sound and reliable as it uses up to date and current guidance. The LVIA concludes that, from a landscape and visual perspective, the application site is suitable for the proposed development due to the proposed mitigation which has been included in order to reduce the landscape and visual effects of the proposals. The applicant appears to have a good appreciation of the scheme design and has recommended appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. A strong integral landscape strategy has been used to direct the development. Officers believe that the proposals have demonstrated how the urban extension is a suitable response to the site and its setting and that there are no outstanding issues which either have not been resolved or are not capable of resolution (in landscaping terms) when the reserved matters are submitted. Therefore, when the positive and negative aspects of the proposal are considered, at least in relation to landscape and visual aspects, it is the view of the Council's Landscape and Planning Officer's that the proposals are acceptable, would not cause an unacceptable level of negative impact and the benefits of the scheme in delivering much needed housing (as required by the Local Plan), outweigh the negative and mainly local effects and the application can therefore be supported on landscape grounds.

### **Flood risk and drainage issues (incl. ground conditions and contamination).**

#### **(a) Background, the site and the submission.**

The site is a rural area on the urban fringe of Taunton comprising agricultural land with a mixture of pasture and arable fields and includes a number of minor roads running towards the north, small ponds and some woodland. The site mainly comprises of a ridge that is orientated south west to north east. The ridge extends into a mainly level terrace to the north east of the site. The steepest gradients within the site are to the south west, where it falls to a wide and flat valley with the Mill Lease Stream at the valley floor to the west of the site. The Mill Lease Stream flows in a southerly direction through the centre of the site before draining to the River Tone approximately 1km south of the site. The eastern boundary is formed by the Kingston Brook which also flows in a southerly direction at this location. The western section of the site slopes down towards the northwest and west to the catchment of the Back Stream. No other watercourses occur within the application site, but several ponds occur and the agricultural land is drained by a network of ditches. A drainage ditch and cluster of ponds lie adjacent to the eastern boundary within land associated with Pyrland Hall. The majority of the Application Site lies within Flood Zone 1, but land along the stream falls within Flood Zone 3. The Application Site is not shown to be within a Source Protection Zone.

In principle, the drainage strategy seeks to:

- Provide drainage through attenuation basins rather than use of infiltration techniques due to ground conditions;
- Provide for betterment to known downstream catchments issues through restriction of discharge to a 'trickle rate'; and
- Avoidance of pollution to receiving watercourses.



In summary, this would comprise a combination of:

- Provision of multiple attenuation basins set within the green infrastructure;
- Discharge would be restricted to 2l/s/ha applied to all storm events including an allowance of 30% for climate change; and
- Inclusion of pollution prevention measures such as oil interceptors upstream of any controlled discharge points.

#### (b) Flood Risk

The Environment Agency flood map shows the site lies predominantly within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year). However, a small area associated with the Mill Lease watercourse is shown to be within both Flood Zone 3 (land assessed as having a greater than a 1 in 100 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year) and Flood Zone 2 (land assessed as having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 annual probability of river flooding in any year) which equates to a high and medium risk respectively. The Environment Agency have no record of historical flooding at the Application Site. It is an area outside the limit of extreme flooding from tidal or fluvial sources. The British Geological Survey has identified that the Application Site is underlain by Mercia Mudstone which is low in permeability. Such low permeability geology is unlikely to increase the risk of groundwater emergence.

The proposed development masterplan shows that all development will be within Flood Zone 1, therefore there is no requirement to apply the Exception Test. The remainder of the application site will be Public Open Space, landscape planting, and other appropriate water compatible uses (as part of the 'Green Wedge') with a negligible impact on the flood zone. The proposed development complies with the principles of the sequential test as the NPPF Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone Compatibility matrix states that 'more vulnerable' development is appropriate in Flood Zone 1 and that 'water compatible' and 'essential infrastructure' development is appropriate in Flood Zone 2 and 3 (provided there is no loss of any flood).

Passing the conditions of the exception test is only required if the site is considered to be at flood risk. In such circumstances the test requires that a proposed development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk, and that it will be safe for its lifetime, without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible reduce flood risk overall. However, as the areas of the site proposed for more vulnerable and less vulnerable development are all at a low risk of flooding, no specific measures are deemed necessary to meet the requirements of the exception test. The application site in any event falls within an area allocated within the Core Strategy and therefore the need for such a Sequential Test will have been examined at the Core Strategy enquiry.

The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) demonstrates that the proposed development is safe, does not increase flood risk downstream and is in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy. In summary, the main findings of the independently prepared Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) are that -

- The majority of the site is demonstrated as being at a low risk of fluvial flooding, with small areas that immediately border the Mill Lease Stream considered to be at moderate and high risk.

- The site is shown to be at a low risk of flooding from all other sources.
- The proposed 'more' and 'less' vulnerable development is entirely located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). This is considered to meet the requirements of the Sequential Test.
- Provision has been made for climate change by increasing peak rainfall intensity by 30% for all design computations undertaken based on the proposed 100 year design life of the development.
- Run-off from impermeable areas of development is to be routed to five ponds on site. Flow controls will be used to attenuate outfall into the local watercourses to a proposed 2l/s/ha trickle rate recognising downstream catchment issues and to provide a betterment where possible.

This has been supported by the Environment Agency (whose initial concerns have now been overcome) and the Lead Local Flood Authority at Somerset County Council, both of whom now have no objection to the proposal (the LLFA subject to conditions).

The potential impact of the development of the Application Site on flood risk (excepting surface water generation) is generally considered to be of negligible sensitivity and negligible magnitude, and therefore of low significance. However, as a short section of the new Spine Road will lift ground levels in Flood Zone 2 and 3 (and result in a potential loss of floodplain storage), the Flood Risk Assessment adopts a precautionary approach and considers the effect to be of moderate adverse significance on a local scale and permanent in nature.

In respect of surface water run-off it is noted that construction would result in currently permeable land being developed, and a level of soil compaction with the erection of site buildings, internal road networks, and compaction through land clearing and storing of materials may impact on surface runoff. The compacted and developed areas during construction have the potential to act as impermeable surface, and would certainly alter the infiltration rates and increase potential runoff within the site. This however would not last once construction was complete. The impact on surface water drainage of the construction phase is therefore considered to be of moderate adverse significance on a local scale but only temporary in nature.

Whilst some potential impacts on the water environment have been identified as a result of the proposed scheme, the measures outlined in this supporting documentation and the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment, whether for the comprehensive development of both the east and west proposals or the east application site alone, are concluded to have no significant detrimental impact on water resources.

#### (c) Ground conditions.

The site consists of greenfield land with no historic use other than agricultural. It is therefore unlikely that the land is contaminated. This is confirmed within Chapter 14 (Ground Conditions) of the Environmental Assessment. The assessment involves consideration of the naturally occurring geological conditions and any man-made deposits. Consideration is given to the physical nature of the rocks, soils and Made Ground, together with information on chemical contamination and geotechnical features arising from the former and existing uses of the Application Site. The

hydrogeological regime, comprising the groundwater in any permeable deposits (rock, soil or Made Ground) beneath the application site, and the hydrological regime (surface water), are described in so much as they interact with land contamination. The condition of the land has been derived from a desk study and walk-over survey.

Since policy EN32 (Contaminated land) of the old Taunton Local plan expired in November 2007, there has been no policy in place dealing specifically with land contamination or stability. There are no relevant policies in either the Core Strategy or the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The Environmental Control Officer (at the Council is not aware of any particular constraints with regard to potential contamination other than contaminants that might be anticipated from a farming land use being sources such as residual agricultural chemicals. The E.H.O. has made clear that in this circumstance, a desk study would be suitable to accompany the application and once the application had been assessed it might be the case that any required intrusive investigation would be the subject of a Planning Condition. This is the recommendation on this issue and a suitable condition is listed with the recommendation.

The submitted survey shows that the majority of the application site (north-eastern part) lies within a Radon affected area' where 5-10% of homes are above the action level and basic radon protection measures will be required for new buildings at this location in line with current guidance. The remainder of the application site is not in a Radon affected area and so less than 1% of homes are above the action level and no radon protection measures are required for new buildings. The Proposed Development at the application site is however considered to be acceptable providing the detailed design of buildings incorporates the required radon protection measures in line with standard good practice.

The desk study does not indicate any significant ground stability hazard in relation to collapsible or compressible ground, dissolution of soluble strata, landslip, running sand or volume change clays.

Environmental protection during construction will be achieved by following an appropriate CEMP and industry standard codes of practice such as those explained in the Environment Agency Pollution Prevention Guidelines

Based on historic land uses and its current operational use, it is concluded that the overall risk from land contamination at the application site is considered to be low for a re-developed site and so from a land quality perspective there appears to be no major constraints to development. The report concludes that it is unlikely that there are any geo-environmental and geo-technical ground conditions that will have any significant implications for the site layout and land usage of the proposed development. Mitigation measures that are stated as being required will be mostly incorporated into the design of the buildings responding to ground conditions and through the implementation of good practice and environmental management procedures during the construction phase. Following implementation of these measures all residual impacts are considered to be neutral/not significant. None of this is disputed, and it would not in any event affect the ability of the Planning Committee to grant planning permission.

### **Archaeological, cultural heritage and conservation issues.**

The planning application is accompanied by an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment, the results of which have informed the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage chapter of the Environmental Statement. This assessment has considered whether the significance of any heritage assets would be harmed as a result of changes to setting resulting from the proposed residential development.

In the NPPF a 'heritage asset' is defined as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are a valued component of the historic environment and include both designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets. The significance of a heritage asset is defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The National Planning Policy Framework identifies a set of 12 "core land-use planning principles" developed to underpin place-shaping and decision making. The 10th principle states that planning should "*conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations*" [para. 17]. Further on [para. 133] the NPPF makes clear that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should take account of the following:-

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

A key policy within the NPPF is that "when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be." Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Where a proposed development will lead to "less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset", this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

There are no direct and physical impacts upon any of the heritage assets within the application site boundaries and therefore, the assessment concentrated on a settings assessment and the archaeological finds. The submitted 'Heritage Settings Assessment' considers whether the significance of any heritage assets would be harmed as a result of changes to setting resulting from the proposed residential development. The proposed development is considered to result in no harm to the heritage significance of Grade II\* Yarde Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Okehills, Grade II Listed Hope Corner House, Grade II Listed Smokey, Grade II Listed Slapes, and Grade II Listed Stone House and associated farm buildings, as a result of changes to their setting resulting from the proposed development. A small level of harm, far less than substantial, would be anticipated in respect of Grade II\* Listed Pyrland Hall, and in respect of the historic park associated with the hall, in its own right. In both instances, this would result from changes to a single field formerly located

within the south of the park. While the park itself is not registered, and of limited heritage significance, and while the field in question contributes nothing to the appearance or appreciation of the asset, as a former area of the associated historic park, it does retain a small level of significance and it does also make a small contribution to the historical intelligibility of Pyrland Hall. This very limited level of harm is a long way short of a 'substantial' level of harm. As required this small level of harm to the hall and former park should be weighed in the planning balance against the public benefits of the scheme.

The proposed development site lies outside of the Staplegrove Conservation Area and therefore, in terms of Section 72 of the Act, any impact would need to be considered in terms of its setting. The proposed development would lead to a small degree of change, and harm, to small parts of the northern edge of the Conservation Area, through alteration to setting. However, overall, a beneficial effect would be anticipated, as a result of the diversion of traffic from the Conservation Area along the proposed new link/spine road. At present the volume of traffic passing through, and adjacent to, Staplegrove Conservation Area is detrimental to the experience and appreciation of the Conservation Area, and thus to its overall heritage significance.

Norton Camp is the only Scheduled Monument, or heritage assets of comparable value, within the surrounding area. This is, however, over 2 kilometres west of the proposed development in the east application. The spine road also forms part of this proposal and effectively brings the application boundary nearer to the Scheduled Ancient Monument. However the nearest edge would still be approximately 0.9 km away. So, it is not considered that the Scheduled Ancient Monument would be susceptible to impact from development specifically within the proposed site or from any other part of this current proposal.

The archaeological assessment identified that this application site has a modest archaeological potential, and the survey indicated a small concentration of probable and possible archaeology, mostly in the south western corner of the site. The geophysical survey picked up some positive anomalies of varying strength, indicating the presence of features that could represent enclosures or ditches. The south western field also contains areas of more ambiguous positive anomalies, which may be of an archaeological origin but could have been caused by natural or modern agricultural activity. Across the centre of the survey area there are a number of possible ploughed out earthwork or bank features. Some of these follow the line of the present field boundaries, so may relate to the cutting or re-cutting of these features. Also the centre of the site contained a number of possible field boundaries. On historic mapping, there are a number of phases of agricultural activity and it is likely that these anomalies relate to some of these phases. There are also extensive pipes, cables or modern services within the survey area, and areas of magnetic disturbance associated with nearby metallic objects such as services or field boundaries.

Consultation with the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council has established that the archaeological remains identified within the allocation site are not of sufficient significance to require preservation in situ or to otherwise preclude development. It is furthermore agreed that the information provided with the Environmental Statement is sufficient and 'proportionate' to allow determination of the application, in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

Advice has been offered on how any impact upon the heritage assets considered could be minimised. This would be a matter for a design response at the detailed or reserved matters stages. There is verifiable evidence to show that this can be achieved. At this outline stage though, it should be noted that there is general agreement between the applicant, Officers and Historic England. Historic England noted that at full application stage a further review will be required, alongside detailed plans and photomontages showing the proposed impact. Of the assets that have potential to be affected they are particularly interested to understand fully the impact upon the formal setting of Pyrland Hall, with its formal landscape. Also they will require access to Oakhill to better understand any potential impact upon this listed building. The Council's Conservation Officer considers that the potential impact of the scheme on the setting of some of the listed buildings may be slightly downplayed in the reports, however, he does note that this is a matter of judgement. He does however, confirm that in no case is the harm greater than 'less than substantial' and this can be reduced by mitigation measures and under paragraph 134 of the NPPF weighed against the public benefits.

As directed by Paragraph 134 of the NPPF (2012), the finding that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets, coupled with the anticipated beneficial impact on the significance of Staplegrove Conservation Area, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal by the decision maker (the Planning Committee). It is considered that the public benefits the proposal would bring identified elsewhere in this report, particularly in achieving the Core Strategy's and the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan's (SADMP) vision for a mixed use urban extension at Staplegrove and thereby contributing to meeting the Borough's housing needs, do outweigh the limited harm to designated heritage assets and the statutory presumption in favour of their preservation. Officers are of the opinion that the proposed development would not result in harm to the historic environment as a result of changes to setting, and, as such, is consistent with Policy CP8 (Environment) of the 'Taunton Deane Core Strategy, 2012 and ENV4 (Archaeology) of the SADMP (2016).\_

### **Biodiversity (Ecology and nature conservation)**

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the primary legislation for England and Wales for the protection of flora, fauna and the countryside. Most European Protected Species offences are now covered under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, but some 'intentional' acts are still covered under the 1981 act. Under the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Planning Authorities should use the planning system to, '*...contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline of biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*' It goes on to state: "*when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity*" and "*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*". The adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy states in the relevant policy CP 8 (Environment) that the aim is to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment, and to not permit development proposals that would harm these interests or the settings of the towns and rural centres unless other material factors are sufficient to override their importance.

An ecological survey has been submitted as part of the Environmental Statement and this assesses the ecological impact of the proposals, identifies ecological constraints, mitigation measures required and also identifies enhancement measures that may be available. Wildwood Consultants have carried out the Preliminary Ecological Assessment for this application at Staplegrove east. The Application Site has been subject to a series of ecological surveys to determine the habitats and species present. These include a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and detailed surveys for Bats (foraging and aerial tree assessments), Dormice, Great Crested Newts, Breeding Birds, and Badger. The original survey data was gathered in 2013, but various specific reports from February 2014 and August 2015 update this information. AA Environmental Ltd carried out the Ecological report for west proposals. The two ecologists have carried out extensive survey work on the site over a number of years. The importance of the application site in relation to ecology and nature conservation has been assessed using standard guidelines provided by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 20061) and by the application of professional judgement.

The Application Site is dominated by arable fields with some cattle grazed pasture (improved grassland) and associated hedgerows and standard trees also present. There is a small shelterbelt woodland, two of ponds within the fields and on the edge of the site. The site is bisected by Kingston Road and Whitmore Lane and other than open drains along sections of these roads, there is no running water. There is a hamlet of buildings on Whitmore Lane and the southern site boundary adjoins a suburban streets. The Pyrland Hall School with its historic parkland is adjacent to the East.

Searches of the local area (within 5km zone around the Application Site), using the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC), have identified that there are no 'on-site' statutory designations of nature conservation interest (SSSIs and LNRs). Searches of the local area, using SERC, identified the following non-statutory designations of nature conservation interest. There is one 'on-site' non-statutory designation of nature conservation interest, namely Pyrland Park LWS (Local Wildlife Site) – a site with an important assemblage of veteran trees. Hestercombe House is designated at a European level as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and at a national level as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its maternity colony for lesser horseshoe bats. Hestercombe contains one of the two largest breeding roosts of lesser horseshoe bat in south-west England. The whole of the Hestercombe house site is within the boundary of Natural England's Impact Risk Zone. This though is located approximately 2km to the northeast of the application site. Silk Mills LNR is about 0.2km to the South of the proposed comprehensive development. Weirfield Park and Gadds Valley Local Nature Reserves are both just over 2 km away. Although the majority of both the application site and the wider comprehensive development site (east and west) is of limited ecological value, being dominated by intensively managed farmland, there are a range of habitats present of ecological importance that support protected species, including Badgers, Bats, Dormice, Great Crested Newts. The main habitats of interest on the Application Site are hedgerows, ponds and Back Stream (Staplegrove West). Habitats of interest adjacent to the Application Site are semi-natural broadleaved woodland and ponds.

An urban fringe development such as this should soften the lines between town and country, bringing wildlife into the development and allowing people to engage easily with the countryside. The site will change from this intensively farmed land to a

designed housing scheme retaining and enhancing key features and creating a range of new habitats, including domestic gardens, public open space, productive landscapes and wilder areas. However, there is a potential impact on the integrity of Hestercombe SAC through the loss of Lesser Horseshoe Bat habitat, loss of flightlines (Bats) and lighting impacts. The adjacent Pyrland Hall parkland is likely to be affected by construction noise and disturbance during the construction phase. In the absence of control measure there could also be harmful effects from pollution or siltation of ponds within the parkland. In a more general sense construction impacts on the fields relate to direct loss. The habitat itself is not an important ecological resource although it does provide some foraging habitat for common species. Construction impacts on hedgerows relate to direct loss and fragmentation. The majority of the trees on the site are scheduled to be retained, however, a small number of trees are scheduled to be felled either to facilitate the development or for arboricultural reasons.

More specifically, the Ecological Survey identifies a number of important species which are likely to be affected by the current proposal and it makes observations and suggests mitigation. This has been checked by both the County Council's ecologist and by the Borough Council's Biodiversity officer and found to be appropriate and accurate. These issues will now be explored in detail.

#### Bats.

Foraging Bat populations recorded on the site are divided into three categories in terms of their ecological value: Barbastelle, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Greater Horseshoe Bat; Serotine; *Myotis* Bats and *Nyctalus/Eptesicus*; and general Bat populations. The development would inevitably result in the loss and disturbance of foraging habitat (hedgerows and trees) and flightlines. No confirmed Bat roosts would be directly lost to the proposals. However, the loss of hedgerows and lighting may affect light sensitive Bat species roosting in Staplegrove village - principally the isolation of a small Lesser Horseshoe Bat roost in the village, or foraging Bats from Hestercombe Mansion. The potential indirect loss of roosts in the village is therefore an impact of medium magnitude and of moderate adverse significance.

Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority may proceed with or consent to the plan only after having ascertained that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site. In this instance, The County Ecologist has prepared a 'Test of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), for this application, under a Service Level Agreement. The same has been done for the concurrent Staplegrove east application as well. The TOLSE has been sent to Natural England for their comments and they have agreed with this report and its findings. The mitigation identified as being required has been dealt with as a cohesive whole (that is for both applications). Importantly, there are no insurmountable issues that have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements. This means that, subject to the



mitigation suggested, there will be no adverse impact upon the integrity of the Hestercombe bat colony.

Natural England has previously advised on the mitigation measures required to ensure that adverse effects on the integrity of Hestercombe House are avoided. Natural England and the County Ecologist and were both satisfied with the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of August 2014, compiled as part of the Council's (then) draft Sites Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). Also, natural England and the County Ecologist have agreed a Statement of Common Ground with the developers and the Council. The County ecologist has now confirmed that the proposals contained in this current outline application are in accordance with the previously agreed plans for the site.

The development will impact on bats through loss of habitat so the mitigation approach has been led by specifications set out within the 2014 HRA for the SADMP and the associated Habitat Evaluation methodology. In line with this document the HRA requires 16.27 ha of replacement habitat to be provided across the whole site, mainly along the northern boundary. The calculations for the amount of 'off-set' planting that will be required has been fine-tuned by the Ecologist at Somerset County Council. The calculations include a time lag calculator so the planting can begin at the start of phase 1. In addition to replacement habitat a purpose built new bat roost will be constructed to the north of the site allocation to support the proposal to incorporate bat boxes into the design of the new houses. This will include the provision of a bat roost structure along the northern boundary of the site (indicative size of a single garage) and a sensitive lighting strategy.

Natural England concludes that the Test of Likely Significance ("Habitats Regulations Assessment") has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC. They conclude that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC. On this basis, Natural England agrees with the conclusions in the HRA and supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. If these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and Natural England would object on that basis.

Although these matters will primarily be a consideration for the reserved matters stage, Members are recommended to accept that 1) the suggested planting is sufficient to mitigate any impact on the bats (as required by the 2014 Habitats Regulations Assessments and environmental law); and, 2) the provision required must be guaranteed by condition(s) at this outline stage. The required conditions have been placed into the recommendation.

#### Dormice.

The vulnerability of Dormice is linked closely to the treatment of hedgerows. Many of the key hedgerows will be retained on the application site (over 80%) and some new ones created to minimise gaps. Whilst Dormice are known to cross gaps, some degree of fragmentation is unavoidable. The provision of new habitat will be designed to minimise this effect. As dormice have been recorded on site, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence will be required prior to the

commencement of the removal of any hedgerows which they inhabit. The Biodiversity officer has asked if the designing of road junctions could be handled sensitively so as to facilitate the dispersal of dormice. This would substantially be a reserved matters consideration.

#### Badgers.

Site clearance could result in the destruction/disturbance of Badgers and their setts. A small number of subsidiary and outlier setts fall within the development footprint and would likely be lost during construction activities. A number of badger setts have been recorded on the site and although it is considered best practice to try and retain badger setts in-situ, the extent and location of some of the outlying and subsidiary setts could restrict the development proposals, particularly due to the alignment of the spine road. A number of these setts may therefore require closure under licence.

#### Great Crested Newts.

The Application Site masterplan has been designed to ensure that all ponds found to contain Great Crested Newts will be retained, surrounded by a buffer of green infrastructure, and provided with habitat connectivity to the surrounding countryside. There will be some loss of terrestrial habitat and connectivity to other ponds and terrestrial habitat, mitigated by a considerable area of green infrastructure and as well as several new ponds provide for flood attenuation and habitat provision. Requirement for an additional licence for Great crested newts will depend on the proximity of the works to ponds and terrestrial habitat.

#### Otters/water voles.

As Otters are active in the area Back Stream (far west end of the comprehensive [east and west] scheme), this application site is likely to be used for foraging and/or commuting. No evidence of Water Vole has been recorded along Back Stream but they are known to be active to the south. Construction activities are however unlikely to impact directly on Back Stream. No evidence of Otter or Water Vole was found on Staplegrove East, and on site culverts/streams were consider only to offer value for commuting between other sites for Otter.

#### Birds.

The development will inevitably result in the loss of foraging and nesting habitat for birds. So the Council's biodiversity officer considers that it is important that all vegetation to be retained should be protected. Other vegetation should only be removed outside of the bird nesting season and vegetation. The Council's biodiversity officer strongly suggests the proposal to incorporate bird boxes into the design.

#### Lighting.

The application site is presently farmland, with the only light source currently present being associated with a farmhouse and barns. The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect Invertebrates, Birds and Bats. Introducing lighting into an otherwise unlit environment cannot be achieved without impact. From an ecological viewpoint design measures will need to be applied to maintain dark corridors particularly for bats. On the assumption that the development will follow best practice in the control of obtrusive lighting and that the landscaping scheme is successfully established, then it is the view of the Biodiversity Officer that light spill on sensitive habitats can

be kept to a minimum. Lighting in connection with the construction phase should be should be carefully controlled by a Construction Environmental Management plan (CEMP). The CEMP should include measures to manage, mitigate and monitor the main environmental impacts during construction, including light, noise, vibration, emissions to air, dust, litter, traffic, water and drainage, and spillages. This can be controlled by condition. One has been added to the recommendation.

#### Other observations and requirements.

The development will be phased, which will help to reduce disturbance to local wildlife to a certain extent. This will result in certain areas on the site being unaffected at particular points in time, which will provide safe refuges for the more mobile species and also allow the new habitats to become established.

In order to protect any established vegetation to be retained on the site and in particular the hedgerows and trees, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. New planting will be introduced to the site, and the preference should be for native species of local provenance. However, where this is not possible a suitable alternative would be to use species of known wildlife value.

Whilst there is currently a good understanding of the ecological receptors on site, the submitted ecological surveys will need to be updated as part of any reserved matters submission(s). Any changes in the way that ecological receptors are using the site at the time of those surveys would be picked up and addressed as part of any reserved matters submission. The current application is in outline only and therefore there is flexibility in relation to any ecological/biodiversity feature that could prove to be affected by any element of the reserved matters. Taking account of the flexibility that exists, there are a number of possible mitigation measures available and ultimately which one is selected will be for consideration and approval at the point of the reserved matter(s) submission(s). It should also be taken into account that this outline submission is accompanied by a comprehensive Green Infrastructure that offers and will deliver a enhancements in the form of additional planting across the application site which will be of direct benefit to the protected species present on site. The schedule of conditions recommended includes appropriately worded conditions to control the measures discussed above most notably. As such appropriate means of control exist to the Council and proportionate means of mitigation can be considered holistically at the reserved matters stage which will take appropriate account of the findings of the updated ecological surveys.

Natural England, Somerset County Council and Taunton and Deane Borough Council have all confirmed their support for the approach proposed in the Ecological Survey by signing a Statement of Common Ground.

Specific mitigation has been put forward to minimise impact on the all protected species recorded on the site, as well as a range of generic measures, along with some compensatory and enhancement measures suggested. If these are fully implemented, the specialist advice Officers have received suggests that the range of habitats found along with the species they support, could be mitigated for. The required measures would need to be worked up into a detailed Ecological Management Plan, to cover the whole site. This can be guaranteed by means of a

condition.

Despite the generally low quality of the existing habitat, a range of species utilise it which could be adversely affected in the absence of mitigation. In summary, in the absence of mitigation the proposed development would have a moderate to significant adverse effect. However, mitigation has been suggested and subject to its implementation, overall the findings of the ecological assessment indicate that there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the development proposals that would preclude outline planning permission from being granted. The provision of on-site and off-site replacement habitat would represent a positive impact to the Hestercombe House SAC. No significant impacts to the Silk Mills Local Nature Reserve is considered likely. Once the Proposed Development is complete, new habitats would be created to provide new opportunities for a range of wildlife. The landscaping and habitats would be managed and maintained in accordance with management plans to ensure successful establishment and it is considered likely that this habitat creation would represent an overall positive impact. The provision of new Bat foraging habitats, two new roosts and a series of Bat boxes would represent an overall positive impact on Bats. The creation of new habitats for Dormice, nesting boxes and improved habitat management would represent an overall positive impact on dormice. The creation of new habitats for Great Crested Newts and improved habitat management would represent an overall positive impact on Great Crested Newts. Sufficient habitat will be retained on the application site to provide foraging opportunity for badgers and any setts that require closing will only be removed once a licence has been granted. Thus, it is considered likely that the removal of any badger sett would result in a temporary neutral impact. Impacts on breeding birds would be avoided through the appropriate timing of works and/or the use of site inspections to check for the presence of Nesting Birds (with any nests found during the inspections to be protected until the young have fledged). As a result, it is considered likely that demolition and construction works would not result in significant impact. The provision of new habitats and series of Bird boxes would represent an overall positive impact on birds, and significant at site level only. The creation of new waterbodies and enhancement of current watercourses would represent an overall positive impact on a range of common species.

Therefore, subject to appropriate mitigation and conditions all of which have been included in the recommendation, the proposals can be recommended as being acceptable in terms of biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation.

### **Agriculture.**

In considering this application, Members have a duty to consider the impact of the development upon agriculture and agricultural land. This is spelled out in legislation and has also become a common theme amongst those who have objected to the proposals.

Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the protection and enhancement of soils as a priority in the conservation and enhancement of the natural and local environment. Paragraph 112 then advises that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which is land classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the

Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system of England and Wales. 112 goes on to advise that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. There is no policy in the NPPF on the effect of development on farm holdings, although paragraph 28 emphasises the need to support economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity by, other amongst means, promoting the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

There are no policies for development involving agricultural land in the adopted Core Strategy although Policy DM1 states that proposals for development will be required to make the most effective and efficient use of land, and Policy DM5(j) indicates that development proposals shall make the maximum possible use within the development site of ..... spare soil generated by the site preparation.

Guidance for assessing the quality of agricultural land in England and Wales is set out in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for the grading of the quality of agricultural land" (1988), which is still relevant today but has been updated by Natural England ('Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land. Technical Information Note [TIN] 049' of 2012). Accordingly, agricultural land in England and Wales is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use, and Grade 5 is very poor quality land, with severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief, climate or a combination of these. Grade 3 land is subdivided into Subgrade 3a (good quality land) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality land). Land which is classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the ALC system is defined as best and most versatile agricultural land.

The application site (Staplegrove east) contains eight agricultural holdings. Land to the west of Whitmore Lane, extending to approximately 4.7 hectares, is owned and occupied by the Staplegrove Farm Partnership and used for general cropping, with field operations undertaken by an agricultural contractor. No other land is operated alongside this land, and there are no farm buildings associated with it. Whitmore Farm occupies land to the east of Whitmore Lane and extends to 23 hectares of mostly arable cropping and a small area of permanent pasture which is let to a local farmer. There are some old farm buildings to the east of Whitmore Lane used for straw storage. A small field to the south of Whitmore Farm is owned by Summerfield Developments but is not in agricultural use. Land to the north of the Application Site is owned and occupied by Thorne Family Farming of Barton House, Kingston St Mary which farms a total of 21 hectares in arable crops with a small area (less than 1 hectare) of permanent pasture. Some old steel portal framed buildings to the north of the Application Site are used for storing straw. The eastern and southern parts of the Application Site are owned by the National Trust and rented by Pyrland Farm which farms over 150 hectares of land to the east and north of the Application Site. Pyrland Farm is a dairy farm, with a herd of 250 milking cows, and general cropping enterprise which includes growing (irrigated) potatoes. All the land is within Entry Level Scheme (ELS) of Environmental Stewardship. The farm buildings are all located outside the Application Site, and there is also a farm shop at Pyrland Farm. Alongside family labour, the enterprise employs three full-time workers with three part-time workers employed in the farm shop. Land to the north, proposed for tree planting, forms part of Lower Marsh Farm which extends to over 90

hectares of arable land, including growing irrigated potatoes. The land to the west proposed for the spine road mostly forms part of Smokey Farm which occupies approximately 215 hectares, most of which is owner-occupier with smaller areas taken on tenancies and licences. The farm is a mainly dairy farm of over 200 milking cows with beef cattle also finished, and is mostly under a temporary grass leys with some permanent pasture and maize and wheat also grown. The very western part of the application site forms part of Staplegrove Mills which is a 33 hectare permanent grassland holding let out for many years to a tenant based some 20 miles away for cattle and sheep grazing. The farm buildings and some land are also rented out as a holding area for an abattoir based at Staplegrove Mills.

The predicted likely effects of this proposal comprise the loss of agricultural land, particularly that of the best and most versatile quality; potential damage to or loss of the soil resource and its accompanying functions; and the potential effect on the continuing viability of the remaining farm holdings following the loss of land and other farm infrastructure to the Proposed Development. These effects will all occur during the construction phase. More specifically, the proposed development will involve the loss of approximately 70 hectares of agricultural land, together with other (non-agricultural) land, which is classified as a mixture of Grades 2, 3a and 3b. The area of best and most versatile land in Grades 2 and 3a within the application site, but excluding the off-lying tree planting, extends to approximately 48 hectares. This land is of medium sensitivity and indicates that the proposed development will have a permanent moderate adverse effect on agricultural land, which is significant in EIA terms and for which no mitigation is available.

There are no universally applicable measures available to mitigate the direct loss of agricultural land although surplus soils, particularly top soils, could be used off-site to the benefit of other agricultural land. Therefore, the proposed development would result in an adverse effect on the 'Best and Most Versatile agricultural Land'. The principal direct effect on the farm holdings as a result of the proposed development will be the loss of available farmland. The effects on the farm holdings vary from minor adverse (in the case of the Comprehensive Development of the east and west proposals) or negligible (in the case of the development without Staplegrove west) but mitigation of these lie with the private interests outside the control of the proposed development and relate to the replacement, if required, of lost land and assets. As such, the residual effects of the development will remain as described prior to mitigation.

Natural England has a statutory role in advising local planning authorities about agricultural land quality issues. It is noted in this instance that the detailed comments received from Natural England about this application made no reference to the Agricultural Land Classification or the quality of the land proposed for use. It is also noted that this was all known before the land was proposed for development within the Core Strategy and formally allocated within the SADMP. The main difficulty is that Taunton is entirely surrounded by 'Best and Most Versatile Land' (as defined) and expansion of the town will inevitably affect this land. This has been considered as part of the evidence base and within the sustainability appraisals for both the Core Strategy and the SADMP. In documents such as 'The Taunton Urban Extension Study' (Terence O'Rourke, November 2004) and 'The Taunton Sub-Area Study' (Baker Associates, October 2005), it has been concluded that the need to meet the housing targets in the plan outweighed the need to preserve the 'Best and Most versatile Land'. This was clearly also considered by the Inspectors who examined the Core Strategy and the SADMP.

Given this and the lack of objection on these grounds from Natural England, officer's advice to Members is that the proposal should not be refused permission on the grounds of the loss of some 'Best and Most Versatile Land' and of some farm holdings.

### **Social dimensions.**

#### **(a) Local centre**

A new mixed-use local centre is proposed at the intersection of the spine road with Kingston Road to serve the new communities at both Staplegrove west and east. This is in accordance with policy TAU2 of the adopted SADMP (bullet point 3), which specifies that the masterplan and phasing strategy should include the following - "A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road". This position was chosen, rather than one more central within the overall urban extension, because the need is for the local centre to serve a wider catchment area in the north of Taunton and not just the new urban extension. The chosen location will have much better accessibility by all modes of transport to this wider catchment area and therefore it will also be likely to have a greater chance of economic success in the longer term.

Thus the mixed-use centre is proposed to be provided on the Staplegrove east site, in order to meet the requirements of policy TAU2. This is a matter of common ground between the two applicants. The highway network and cycle/pedestrian links have been designed to ensure maximum accessibility from the West site to the new centre.

The policy asks that the new store should comprise a convenience store (A1) of up to 500 m<sup>2</sup> (gross); 500 m<sup>2</sup> of other convenience retailing (A1), financial/professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3); at least one public house (A4), take-away (Class A5) and a community hall building (comprising of main hall, storage, kitchen, toilets) and associated parking, together with 0.25ha of land for a place of worship. Residential or office uses should be provided on upper floors. Whilst the outline application for the concurrent Staplegrove west application does incorporate the provision of a local centre, it is currently unclear, from the supporting documentation, whether the proposed local centre will meet the policy requirements for the mix of uses proposed in Policy TAU2. The eastern application proposes a mixed use area of up to 1.6 hectares as the key location for activity. The applicant for the east site has identified that it is important for the local centre to complement, rather than compete with existing town centre retail facilities and to this end it will need to provide a range of small-scale facilities within convenient walking distance of the new homes. The Environmental Statement assumes the following maximum gross internal floor space areas within the local centre:-

- Up to 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 Use Classes;
- Up to 500 m<sup>2</sup> of B1 Use Class;
- Up to 250 m<sup>2</sup> of D1 Use Class.

It is anticipated that a range of facilities could include a local food store with a gross internal floor space of 500 m<sup>2</sup>, other retail with a gross internal floor space of up to 500m<sup>2</sup>, office (on upper floors) and multi-functional community uses. Uses within this range are considered to be appropriate for a truly local centre and would not adversely compete with existing town centre facilities.

However, although the Staplegrove east application seeks to establish the principle of a mixed use local centre, the exact composition will be reserved for later consideration by the Local Planning Authority. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the local centre provides what is envisaged in the policy. This will be covered by a condition which will ensure delivery of the local centre in accordance with a detailed design brief that will have been previously negotiated and agreed.

It is clear that the new local centre needs to be handled sensitively given the many functions and activities it will host. The applicants have agreed to the suggestion of a design brief to handle all aspects of the local centre, with a view to providing an excellent, well planned environment at this point that would be pedestrian friendly, have a strong economic viability, a pedestrian friendly and human scale environment, and an attractive, prosperous and pleasant environment. The design brief would be required by condition before any work took place on this phase of the development.

#### (b) Employment

In addition to the construction jobs, and those within the new local centre, a significant number of jobs will also be generated by this application (Staplegrove east) through the provision of 1 hectare of employment land (2 ha of employment land including Staplegrove west). This is in accordance with the requirements of the Council's adopted Site Allocations and Development Management DPD. The agreed masterplan demonstrates the provision for employment land across two locations either side of the proposed local centre. The delivery of the employment land will be dependent on the market, although the sites will be provided as serviced land in line with the phasing strategy. The future use of the employment land will depend on market requirements and consideration of the parcel's specific characteristics such as neighbouring land uses, access to the strategic transport network and massing constraints.

The number of jobs that will be created on the 1 hectare of employment land will vary depending on the layout, specific uses and occupiers of these sites. Indeed, the variation is so large with office workers averaging 10 sqm per employee and warehousing averaging 80 sqm per employee, that it is impossible at this stage to provide a reasonable estimate of the number of jobs likely to be generated. Similarly, the number of jobs generated in the local centre will be dependent upon the layout, uses and occupiers and cannot be accurately estimated. However, we do know that the Environmental Statement assumes a maximum gross floorspace of up to 6,666sqm over two storeys within the employment area and analysis does suggest that a total of circa 180 to 350 jobs could be generated (in addition to the construction jobs) within the Proposed Development.

#### (c) Healthcare

As one of its Strategic Objectives, the Core Strategy aims to reduce health inequalities and improve access to services and facilities. The focus is on creating the right environment to promote wellbeing by providing the means for a healthy lifestyle. The following facilities exist within close proximity to the application site:

Primary Care - There are 9 GP Surgeries within 5 km of the Application Site. Five



of these are currently accepting new patients.

Secondary Care - There are approximately 6 hospitals with 16km (10 miles) of the application site providing a number of services. The nearest Accident and Emergency department is at Musgrove Park Hospital, which is part of the Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and is the main provider of hospital services to the population of western Somerset. The Musgrove Park Hospital is 2.6 miles from the application site.

It will be noted from the consultation comments above that the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group has concerns regarding the impact of this proposed development on the local National Health Services. NHS England (south, south-west) confirms that the current NHS funded services in Taunton are sufficient only for the current population with no additional capacity available to cater for the proposed increase in population to be generated by this application. It is true that the new homes in Staplegrove will generate a significant number of new residents, all of whom will require access to Primary Care Services in the area, including GP services. However, these will not be new people to the NHS, but will be people already registered within the NHS and relocating from elsewhere in Taunton or beyond. NHS England has a duty to commission local healthcare services to meet the expected needs of the population of Somerset including the demands of the additional population of the new developments. At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset.

The NHS England (south, south west team) estimates that 1500 new houses in Staplegrove would result in approximately 3,600 new residents. This equates to approximately an additional 2.12 G.P.s required to provide sufficient capacity for the new residents. Their position is that there are several practices in the area with 3 practices within 2km of the site. However, based on an analysis of the number of GPs at these practices and space available there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers of new patients expected. The current premises are considered to be the main limitation to accepting the additional new residents. They are apparently currently struggling for the space needed to provide services to meet the NHS General Practice Forward View. The results of assessment indicate there is no local capacity that is accessible and therefore the addition of the new residents in Taunton and specifically at Staplegrove will require additional capacity.

NHS England (south, south west team) have endorsed the need for healthcare facilities to be provided at the outset of the construction phase because in their opinion it is important that there are healthcare facilities available before residents occupy their houses. Given there is no capacity in neighbouring practices, NHS England maintain that they would be unable to fulfil their statutory duties without further interim provision of local healthcare services during the development process.

The new homes in Taunton (Staplegrove) will generate a significant number of new residents who will all require access to Primary Care Services in the area including GP services. Although General Practices operate as individual businesses, they are contracted to the NHS and publically funded for the delivery of Primary Care Services. The NHS local board have challenged any assumption that there is sufficient capacity with Taunton practices, thereby concluding that no support is needed to enhance the Primary Care infrastructure as a result of the development.

It is alleged that the Staplegrove application will contribute the need for additional capacity. The proposed solution proposed as a result of new housing will be needed on a gradual basis as houses are built and sold. This infrastructure will necessitate costs and building for the total of the new population with “void” space built in and then utilised gradually during the life of the proposed development until completion. However, duty to commission local healthcare services to meet the expected needs of the population of Somerset including the demands of the additional population of the new developments clearly rests with NHS England.

The NHS uses guidance that suggests that residents should have access to a GP within 15 minute walk or with public transport as an appropriate measure of accessibility. At this stage of the development it is not possible to determine travel times for public transport or walking and so NHS England (South, South West) support the requirement for public transport and cycling/walking routes to be provided within the development area to provide that accessibility. Research conducted for the SADMP has indicated that 1500 new houses in Staplegrove would be likely to result in 3,600 new residents in Staplegrove. This equates to approximately an additional 2.12 GPs to provide sufficient capacity for the new residents. There are several practices in the area with 3 practices within 2km of the site. Patients can register with a GP practice of their choice, as long as they live within its catchment area and it is accepting new patients. GP practices now agree their practice boundaries with NHS England. Practices can apply to NHS England if they have insufficient capacity to care for further patients to close their patient list. Currently there are no practices in Somerset with a closed patient list. However, based on an analysis of the number of GPs at the 3 local practices, As a result of a benchmarking exercise, NHS England consider that there is no local capacity that is accessible and that there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers of new patients expected at Staplegrove. NHS England (South, South-West Team) strongly endorse the need for healthcare facilities to be provided at the outset of the construction phase because it is important that there are healthcare facilities available before residents occupy their houses. They state that given there is no capacity in neighbouring practices, NHS England would be unable to fulfil its statutory duties without further interim provision of local healthcare services during the development process.

This would allow for incremental increase in services available in good time for when they will be needed. This would also allow sufficient time to plan and develop the permanent facility required on the completion of the proposed new neighbourhoods at Taunton.

NHS England (South and South-West Team) maintain that there are adequate pharmaceutical services to meet the needs of the new populations. However, they do point out that the pharmaceutical provision from nearby pharmacies may not be readily accessible to the new population. Nearby pharmacies are sited adjacent to and/or near other local primary care centres or in major retail areas, and they may therefore require excessive travel. Thus, securing accessible pharmaceutical services within the new community may require the provision of pharmaceutical premises within the new Staplegrove neighbourhoods.

Since 2006, patients are not registered with dentists and a dentist is only responsible for a patient's care whilst they are in a course of treatment. Although many practices do have their 'regular' patients, the commissioning of dental services differs somewhat from that of general practice. The usual planning assumption is 1 dentist per 2,400 patients and so the Staplegrove new neighbourhood would require about

1.5 dentists to provide care for the new population.

On the basis of all this, the NHS England (South, South-West Team) and the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group have requested contributions to enable the construction of extension space of 1083 sqm for General Practice facilities, and 1.5 dentists with retail space available for optometrist and pharmacy outlets. They have specifically asked for a financial contribution to an extension at the nearest surgery (Lyngford Park), costed at £669,600 incl. VAT and fees, together with a 1.5 dentist surgery/extension of 60 sqm with a budget cost of £172,800. It is stated that this funding will be required at the outset of the development to ensure adequate capacity can be developed and planned to a total of £842,400 (incl VAT), but excluding land. This is a considerable sum of money that has been requested in order to ensure the kinds of health services at a local scale that a new community of this size would need. Caselaw implies that this type of infrastructure should not be funded through s106 monies. Whilst healthcare does not specifically appear on the Council's regulation 123 (CIL) list, healthcare funding could still theoretically be delivered through CIL, although in light of the many demands on CIL funding, it is officers' opinion that it is highly unlikely that this will be the case.

(d) Education

Policy TAU2 of the Taunton Deane adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan requires only the provision of a primary school to serve the new urban extension at Staplegrove, although it also identifies that it should have pre-school facilities.

The yield of primary school places from new housing development is usually calculated on the basis of 30 places per 150 dwellings. On this basis, the Staplegrove east development (in isolation) would lead to a need for 183 additional primary school places in the local area. Due to the oversubscription of existing primary schools in the area, these figures for primary education are larger than the number of surplus places at the combined nearest primary schools. Primary age pupils could not reasonably be expected to attend other existing schools further afield although given the current situation the exercise of parental choice may have the effect of children travelling greater distances. However, it is clear that the proposal requires the provision of a new primary school and this is recognised by the policy requirements of Core Strategy policy SS6 and particularly the Site Allocations And Development Management Plan policy TAU2.

The County Education Authority (CEA) has identified the need for a 14 class 2 form intake primary school to serve the new urban extension. This is reflected in the policy requirements. The school required to serve the new community is proposed within the concurrent application for Staplegrove east, although clearly it would serve both the east and west applications. Providing that the Staplegrove east development comes forward at the same time as Staplegrove west, a one form entry primary school (with the capacity to expand to two form entry) with 'early years' provision is proposed to be delivered as part of the overall masterplan. This will generate approximately 210 additional primary school places (with the capacity to expand to 420 places) which will accommodate additional demand generated by the development. This is considered to be in line with policy TAU2 of the adopted SADMP. The CEA is satisfied with the site reserved for the school in as much as it is relatively flat, can be satisfactorily serviced and is located far enough away from

other primary schools. The main difficulty perceived by the CEA relates to the need to access the site early in the development process in order to deliver the school. It is estimated that the school will be required within 2 years from the start of the development. However, the spine road is unlikely to be built as far as the school site within this time frame and so access is a concern. This, together with the required land transfer process will need to be resolved during the negotiations of the legal agreement. The land will need to be transferred to the County Council at the start of the development or as soon as possible thereafter. The applicant's and the CEA are currently exploring the possibility of providing a school under the Government's 'free school' programme. This would reduce the financial burden on the CIL fund. It is not clear yet whether this has a reasonable prospect of success, however, the CEA is fully aware that it will be obliged to build a school if not, even if CIL monies are not guaranteed to fund the cost. Officers are currently working closely with Somerset County Council and the applicants to ensure a primary school is delivered on site.

In Taunton, according to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (latest edition, 2014) there is currently spare secondary school capacity. Although Heathfield Community School is oversubscribed, there is limited capacity at the Bishop Fox's School, but most of the current capacity is at Taunton Academy, which is a reasonable distance to the application site. The IDP maintains that Taunton will require a new 7-form entry secondary school towards the end of the local plan period, although this is currently being revised to take account of a recent unexpected growth in birth rates. It is now considered that a new school is likely to be required by 2023/24 (or equivalent additional capacity). Nevertheless, it is clear that the Staplegrove urban extension (either application or both) will not generate the need for a new secondary school by itself.

(e) Community hall.

Community Centres in proximity to the site include Priorswood Community Centre (1.8 miles); Frank Bond Community Centre (1.7 miles); and The Albemarle Centre (1.7 miles). However, policy TAU2 (bullet point 3) requires the provision of a community hall building as part of the urban extension proposals. Such a community hall is currently proposed within the local centre, which is within the Staplegrove east application site boundary. Clearly it is intended to serve both application sites. The s106 legal agreement will need to have provisions in place for the delivery of such a community hall if the Staplegrove east proposal does not come forward.

(f) Sports pitches, play areas, allotments and other areas of open space.

TDBC's Green Space Strategy sets out the assessments of current provision of green spaces, play spaces, allotment and outdoor sports facilities across Taunton Deane. The strategy identifies that Staplegrove will need to accommodate an additional 8.47ha of open space by 2026 to meet new demands from future development.

In terms of public open space, children's play and leisure, the proposals for Staplegrove east incorporate the following

- Local Areas for Play (LAP)
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)

The agreed masterplan provides space for LEAPs and NEAPs. LAPs are provided as informal play spaces within the public open spaces.

Consultation with the Council's Community Leisure Officer has identified the local authority's preferences for play space. This consultation has informed the strategy for the proposed type of play equipment, the use of surfaces and the requirement for boundary treatments. As a result the following principles and features are integrated within the strategy:

- Equipped play areas to be provided, in accordance with current and relevant, quantity and distance standards, are to comprise of Local equipped areas for play (LEAP and Neighbourhood equipped areas for play (NEAP).
- Equipped play areas to include features to cover all the play disciplines;
- Grass mats, bark and sand are preferred materials for safety surfaces;
- Local equipped area for play (LEAP) boundaries generally to be fenced with two gated entrances, this will help contain sand surfacing;
- Neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP) boundaries generally to remain unfenced, however protection to be provided adjacent to roads and between play zones and any adjacent ponds/ attenuation basins. Typical boundaries to include fencing and shrub planting;
- Inclusion of a key feature within in each park, with each to be different across the site.
- LAP

Five equipped play areas have been incorporated into the masterplan, comprising four LEAPs and one NEAP. Further to this, opportunities for informal play recreation are provided within the green wedge and in greenspaces across the development.

In the case of Staplegrove east, it identifies the location of the eight public open spaces, and the six play areas

- POS 1 includes a 0.04ha LEAP
- POS 2 includes a 0.09ha LEAP
- POS 3 includes a 0.18ha NEAP
- POS 4 includes a 0.08ha LEAP
- POS 5 includes sports pitches
- POS 6 provides an extension to the tree lined avenue from the Pyrland Estate
- POS 7 includes a 0.04ha LEAP
- POS 8 includes a 0.08ha LEAP

The play equipment for the equipped children and youth play areas together with the proposed new sports facilities, the allotments and other areas of open space would be appropriately maintained over time either by a private management company or by the Council. Depending on management arrangements, if required, an appropriate contribution would be made towards the Council's ongoing maintenance costs.

The Council's Community Leisure Officer has identified that provision for play and active recreation should be made for the residents of the proposed new dwellings. Every family sized 2 bed + dwelling should provide 20sqm of both equipped and non-equipped play space. The equipped play spaces should be centrally located and over looked by front facing dwellings to promote natural surveillance. The lay out of

the equipped play spaces and the type of equipment within them should be agreed with TDBC Open Spaces. The Play Strategy submitted with application proposes 5 LEAP's and 1 NEAP. However, it is the C.L.O.'s opinion that a development of this size should provide at least 3 LEAP's and 2 NEAP's. Despite this measure of disagreement, it is felt that the matter can be successfully negotiated through the legal agreement under s106.

It is recognised that 915 dwellings will also generate the need for a community hall consisting of a main hall, toilets, kitchen and activity room. However, the C.L.O states that as the need for a community hall arises from both application sites (Staplegrave east and west), this could be served by the provision of one hall with additional meeting and activity rooms rather than 2 smaller independent facilities.

For a community of 1600 homes the Council's Open Spaces Manager recommend the following:

- Allotments – 2.464 Hectares;
- Equipped Public Playing Fields – 7.2 Hectares

Any provision for schools within this development proposal do not count as part of the Council's requirements. In first instance allotment site(s) and playing pitches should be offered to the Parish Council, then the Borough Council and as a last resort a management company details of which to be submitted to the Borough Council for approval.

Officer's preferred management strategy is that all of these facilities should be offered to the Parish Council first, with the Borough Council taking ownership and responsibility if the Parish decline. The Council's position has always been that the use of a management company to oversee the provision and maintenance of such facilities should be a last resort, although this is known to be the applicants' preferred way of dealing with the issue. As was agreed by Members when considering the south-west Taunton urban extension at Comeytrove, Officers recommend that this issue is left to be resolved by Officers as part of their negotiations on the legal agreement. The amount of individual open space and the method of provision and maintenance is a matter that is considered best dealt with as part of the s106 negotiations, because Members are not being asked to approving specific locations and amounts at this stage. The only requirement is to be sure that the Council's adopted requirements can be met. Officers are confident that it can, but as usual have built in the proviso that the matter should be reported back to Members if any part of the required legal agreement cannot be satisfactorily resolved and the obligations cannot be agreed.

### **Public Health issues.**

Health in relation to design is more than just providing doctor's surgeries. It is about accessibility, getting people away from private cars, cycle routes, recreational provision and opportunities, allotments, desire lines, legibility, community facilities, community interaction – in fact placemaking. All major planning applications should be looking at these issues because communities work better when people are happy and people are happy when they are healthy, so healthy people lead to good communities, and good communities arise out of good town planning. Let us not forget that planning as we know it today evolved out of the mid to late nineteenth

century health and welfare acts anyway.

The NHS structure within England changed on the 1 April 2013 with the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). This change principally created the NHS Commissioning Board, known as NHS England, replacing the Primary Care Commissioning function previously undertaken by the Somerset Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset). At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Public health has been identified as being something which needs to be considered in all planning documents - there needs to be a reference to public health outcomes. At about the same time, Public Health as a profession was removed from the NHS and placed within the jurisdiction of the Local Authorities. In this case, Somerset County Council. In dealing with the Staplegrove proposals, Officers have been greatly assisted by the Public Health officer at the County Council, who considers his role as being to investigate how the health of the proposed new community could be improved through good town planning. This is particularly important to the Borough Council now because the bid for Garden Town status was very much predicated on the health and well-being agenda, with an emphasis on trying to create greener more liveable communities.

The Director of Public Health is keen to ensure that urban extensions to Taunton and other communities are designed and constructed so as to maximise public health gain for both the new and existing communities. He sees this proposed development as providing an opportunity to enable health and well-being, by maximising opportunities for physical activity, through enabling active travel choices for work, school and leisure. This will not only promote individual health and well-being, but reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce CO2 emissions. In aiming to achieve this, he maintains it is vital that the principles of sustainability required by national planning guidance are applied so that residents are enabled to live healthily and so that the healthier choices are the obvious choices. As this is only an outline application, this process will inevitably be somewhat constrained, because most of the key public health initiatives will be relevant only at the detailed design stage of any subsequent reserved matters applications.

The Director of Public Health has identified a number of concerns with this proposed development at the outline stage. The main issues of concern to public health with this proposed development is the transport assessments and the implications for travel choices to and from the development to trip generators elsewhere in the town. This is not in his view in accordance with national and local planning guidance which requires sustainable travel modes to be prioritised, nor with NICE Public Health guidance, endorsed by the Department for Transport, which also advises that walking and cycling should be prioritised ("Ensure the physical environment encourages people to be physically active).

The Director of Public Health is particularly concerned about the provision for cycling within the new community and how the surveys undertaken fail to recognise the paucity of existing cycling provision in the area. It is now well established that planning for cycling should be based on what current non-cyclists who are potential

cyclists would accept, not experienced road cyclists. Conversely, high quality cycling infrastructure is well liked and accepted by current cyclists, while facilitating new people to cycle of all age ranges and abilities. The transport infrastructure from the development to Taunton railway station is inadequate for cycling, meaning that very few new residents would be willing to consider cycling to the station or on to other parts of the town.

The Director of Public Health points to best continental practice which enables cyclists and walkers to choose more direct routes than are available to drivers. Closing Corkscrew Lane to through motor traffic, and upgrading the connecting routes into Taunton including the railway station would make these modes more attractive than would otherwise be the case.

On the subject of schools, The Director of Public Health is concerned that there is no real consideration of travel to secondary school. The nearest school is Taunton Academy, but the road route along Hope Corner Lane narrows to single vehicle width. He urges consideration to be given to providing a direct walking and cycling route from the Staplegrave East development site into the Academy and leisure centre site.

The concerns at this stage relate mainly to highway infrastructure and so have been passed on to the Highway Authority. They mainly relate to the implementation of detailed considerations which are not entirely the subject of this outline application. They have been addressed where possible at this stage, with promises that all of the other more detailed concerns will be addressed at the reserved matters stages. At this stage, Members are asked to note that the suggested measures and changes sought will clearly need to be subject of further discussions with the County Highway Authority particularly in respect of those measures that should be included within the Travel Plan and other s106 requirements. Therefore, it is recommended that Members delegate responsibility for trying to achieve this to Officers as part of the s106 negotiations. On this basis, it is not considered that there are any insurmountable issues raised by the Director of Public Health that would indicate that the proposal is unacceptable.

#### **Affordable housing (and viability).**

Policy CP4 of the adopted Core Strategy (September 2012) outlines the Council's requirements for affordable housing provision. The adopted 'Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document' (May 2014) takes this forward and makes clear that 25% of all new housing should be in the form of affordable units. The SPD specifies that the Council will seek a tenure split of 60% social rented housing and 40% intermediate housing or affordable rented, with the unit types reflecting the mix of the overall development. This is the adopted requirement of the Council.

In response to this, the planning application was submitted making clear that it '*aimed to deliver up to 25% of the total 915 dwellings as affordable housing (229 units)*'. This was noted by the application as being in line with the guidance within the SPD. The application as originally submitted states that the affordable units will be provided on site and integrated within the development in order to promote social cohesion, and that subject to further discussions with the Council, the size and tenure of homes will aim to reflect the overall development and respond to identified local needs.



In August of last year (2016), the applicant for this Staplegrove east proposal indicated to the Council that for reasons of viability it would not be possible to provide 25% affordable housing on this site and instead offered to provide 10% affordable housing on the basis of a 50/50 tenure split. The reason for this offer, being well below the policy compliant position, is stated as being because the site has a number of constraints and abnormal costs that contributed to it not being a typical development site and which has impacted upon the sites viability.

The Councils Affordable Housing SPD makes clear that when assessing proposals, the Council will have regard to the economics of provision. It states that where it is claimed that full or partial delivery of the affordable housing as required by policy CP4 is not possible on viability grounds, the Council will in the first instance consider a revised tenure split and unit types for the development. In the event that this cannot resolve the viability issues, the applicant will be expected to submit a viability statement to include detailed calculations and submissions to enable an assessment of viability to be carried out. The SPD makes clear that such an approach would need to be independently assessed using an independent assessor preferred by the Council with the applicant expected to meet any costs.

This process has been followed for this application. The applicant has submitted a viability assessment prepared in support of the application which concludes that the development cannot viably deliver a policy compliant level of affordable housing (25%) and meet other costs associated with the proposed development. The submitted viability assessment has been independently assessed on behalf of the Council by 'Three Dragons'. The findings have enabled officers to agree on the amount and nature of the costs involved with the application proposals, particularly in respect of affordable housing. The extent and results of these discussions are covered in the section below (viability).

#### **Viability (and affordable housing).**

In line with other development in Taunton Deane, policy requires that development at TAU2 Staplegrove should seek to provide 25% affordable housing, subject to viability, in accordance with Local Plan Policy CP4: Housing.

As part of the outline planning application process in 2016, the applicants for Staplegrove East and Staplegrove West submitted viability appraisals to support the proposition that development in this location could only support 10% affordable housing. This proposition was based upon detailed cost plans (outlining the costs of infrastructure such as the new road and removal of overhead powerlines, preparation of the site for development and costs to build the scheme) for both application sites. Given that the proposal would not meet the affordable housing policy, these assessments have been independently scrutinised by experts appointed by the Council.

The outcome of this process was that the applicants' offer is revised to 15% affordable housing across the overall site, at a 60% rented and 40% shared ownership tenure split. This takes account of the various on-site and offsite costs that the development is required to provide, including the early provision of the primary access road running from Staplegrove Road to Taunton Road. It is important

to note that the 15% offer is subject to future reviews on viability as is normal for schemes of this size and can be guaranteed through the legal agreement under s106. Therefore 15% should be considered as a minimum to be achieved on this site.

One factor that may trigger such a review and increase the level of affordable housing is through the bidding for government funds. The Government has recently launched the Housing Infrastructure Fund, which includes the Marginal Viability and Forward Funding programmes. A bid for funding for the Staplegrove primary access road is being prepared in time for the Marginal Viability fund deadline of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Funding for the road will reduce the risk to development on the overall site and is anticipated to assist early provision of the school as well as speeding housing delivery.

A key factor for increasing the chances of funding under this programme is that the site is close to delivering housing, and part of this will be achieving planning consent. If this bid is successful, then it is anticipated that the affordable housing provision could be increased up to 25% across the site. The decisions on which schemes will receive Marginal Viability funding are expected to be announced as part of the 2017 Autumn Statement.

### **Phasing**

The scale of development on the site requires a detailed phasing strategy to cover the delivery of housing, employment land and the local centre alongside the delivery of supporting infrastructure, landscaping and mitigation. The infrastructure supporting the development will not all be required at the outset. The applicant has undertaken studies to determine the thresholds at which associated infrastructure is required, linked to number of occupied dwellings. These thresholds form the phasing plan and will be set prior to reserved matters stage through the imposition of appropriate conditions attached to any outline consent. Some of the timing and phasing of the development will also need to be set within the subsequent legal agreement.

The construction programme was initially expected to commence during 2017, subject to gaining planning permission and the necessary approvals. However, this is now likely to be put back due to time taken with negotiations particularly on highways issues, undergrounding of the power lines, viability and affordable housing. It is still, however, expected to take approximately 10 years from commencement, with first completions due within the first year of commencement.

Construction would progress in two phases, with up to 325 residential dwellings, the primary school and up to 0.5 hectares employment delivered in Phase 1. Associated Green infrastructure, SUDS and tree planting for bat mitigation and visual screening would also be implemented as part of the Phase 1 development.

The entire Spine Road across East and West Staplegrove will be delivered prior to delivery of any of phase 2. This may of course be brought forward significantly if the Council is successful in its proposed bids to the Department of Communities and Local Government for funding under the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

The mixed use area, remaining residential dwellings (including flats within the mixed use area), remaining employment and associated Green infrastructure, SUDS and additional tree planting for bat mitigation and visual screening would be developed within Phase 2. The phase 2 parcels are designed as standalone developments, and as such can come forward in any order.

Any off site works deemed necessary will be secured via legal agreement with defined triggers.

A proportion of the required infrastructure will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The delivery of this will therefore be within the Council's control.

### **Planning Obligations and Infrastructure delivery.**

The three tests set out in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 require S.106 agreements to be:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) directly related to the development; and
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

Regulation 123 of CIL Regulations states that a planning obligation may not constitute a reason for granting planning permission where the obligation provides for the funding or provision of an infrastructure project or type of infrastructure and five or more separate planning obligations for the funding or provision of that project or type of infrastructure have been entered into. Policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan outlines specific infrastructure requirements in order to create a sustainable community. These have already been considered elsewhere in this report. The items listed at the start of this report are considered to be required to mitigate the impact of the development and to make the application acceptable in planning terms.

There have been on-going discussions with the developers and Somerset County Council (as the Education and Highways authorities) to agree the timely delivery of infrastructure required to support the development. Discussions have also taken place with relevant officers within Taunton Deane Borough Council. Appendix one details the identified infrastructure needs arising from the development and the possible funding mechanism for delivery (i.e. s106 and CIL). As part of the amended CIL Regulations developers are able to deliver infrastructure items through Payment in Kind (Regulation 73A) and off-set this infrastructure payment against their CIL liability.

The proposed development is likely to generate between £5.3m and £6.2m in CIL receipts for the dwellinghouses over the lifetime of the development. There will in addition be extra CIL receipts for the retail element of the local centre, but the floorspace (required for CIL calculation purposes) is not yet known. CIL receipts are used for strategic infrastructure requirements other than those which are necessary to make the scheme work and hence acceptable. Necessary works are the responsibility of the developer, whereas CIL items will be funded from the Council's received CIL monies. The CIL Regulations, as amended (Reg 59A), requires Taunton Deane as the charging authority to pass 25% of the CIL receipts to

a relevant parish council with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan and 15% in the absence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. For the maximum amount to be due (25%), the Neighbourhood Plan has to have passed through its examination, had a positive result from its referendum and been adopted formally by the Borough Council. In the case of this application, these steps would need to have been completed before the submission of a reserved matters application, otherwise the amount due to the Parish Council would be 15%. The amount due to the Parish Council may change over the course of the reserved matters applications, as they are likely to be the subject of phased submissions.

The Education Authority has confirmed that the development in itself does not trigger the need for a new secondary school. The Education Authority have confirmed that at present there are sufficient secondary school places in Taunton to accommodate the secondary school places likely to be generated by the development. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2014) highlights the need for a new 7-form entry secondary school towards the end of the (Core Strategy) plan period. The provision of CIL funding to support the delivery of the new secondary school will need to be considered by the Council based upon its CIL governance arrangements.

As confirmed earlier in this report NHS (England) have asked for a considerable sum of money to fund new healthcare practices to serve the new development. Officers consider that the request is not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, it is not directly or fairly related to the development, it is not fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, and is likely to fall foul of the requirements not to have more than five contributions pooling towards a provision. Caselaw implies that it should not be funded through s106 monies. Whilst healthcare does not specifically appear on the Council's regulation 123 (CIL) list, healthcare funding could still theoretically be delivered through CIL, although in light of the many demands on CIL funding, it is officer's opinion that it is highly unlikely that this will be the case.

Appendix one attached gives officer's opinion on how the infrastructure works could be funded. The list of required infrastructure is accurate and reflects the requirements of the various consultees on this application. However, the detail will still need to be confirmed and ratified in a legal agreement. It is recommended that the detailed requirements of the s106 obligations should be delegated to the Assistant Director to resolve under delegated powers in consultation with the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. In the event that agreement cannot be reached, the application would be referred back to the Planning Committee for their further consideration.

The Estimated CIL receipts for both Staplegrove east and west, over the lifetime of the project, and not including any retail element, would be in the order of between £8.6 million and £10.1 million (approx.).

### **Conclusions.**

The starting point for the determination of this application is the development plan. The site is allocated in the development plan and so the provisions for applying a presumption in favour of sustainable development in decision-taking, as set out in paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, apply in this case. The

current proposal meets the tests imposed on the allocation which are outlined in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

There is a strong national commitment to economic growth and housing delivery. The potential economic and social benefits of the proposal would contribute significantly to these national objectives and are an important material consideration.

The points of entry into the site are to be determined at the outline stage. Following a redesign of the access/egress onto Kingston Road, the applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that they work. The traffic impact of the proposal is now considered to be acceptable following agreed measures of mitigation and subject to the terms suggested for the legal agreement under s106 of the Act and conditions as advocated. It has been demonstrated that the additional traffic from the development would not have a severe impact on the free flow of traffic within the village of Staplegrove and this is a considerable factor that indicates approval can be given. It is noted that on these grounds, there is not now any substantive objection to the technical highway engineering detail by either the County Highway Authority or Highways England.

The relationship with the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is important and the concerns raised by the AONB Service have been taken into account. However, these are largely issues of strategic impact and these were considered at the public examinations into both the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. Matters of detail in respect of potential impact can be appropriately considered at the reserved matters stage and are considered to be capable of resolution. Therefore, it is not considered to be appropriate to withhold permission on this basis. It is noted that the proposed Green Wedge is of a different size from that mooted in previous studies as part of the development planning process. However, the reduction in some of its width is compensated for by a further extension northwards and it is not felt that this in any way compromises the overall aim of the Green wedge policy.

In terms of flood risk, the proposal complies with the requirements of the NPPF, local planning policy and the requirements of the Lead Local Flood Authority. Any potential flood risk can be mitigated.

There are no substantial heritage or conservation issues, although it is recognised that some care will be required when the reserved matters and conditions are considered.

All of the potential nature conservation and biodiversity issues have been demonstrated to be mitigated, including the internationally important bat colonies and roosts at Hestercombe. Mitigation planting is proposed, both on and off-site to assist in this regard.

The social dimensions considered in this report are all shown to be in place and deliverable. As part of this, the application proposes the creation of a primary school, which if fully developed, is understood to provide additional school capacity beyond that which is generated by this and the concurrent Staplegrove west developments. The application would secure large amounts of open space, and while this is primarily required to mitigate the impact of development it would have wider public benefits. Accordingly, this should be given moderate weight in favour of the grant of planning permission. The development would generate economic

benefits both during construction and post occupation. This would include job creation and an increase in potential expenditure in the area on goods and services. These economic benefits should also be given considerable weight. These factors can be guaranteed through the legal agreement under s106 of the Act. Those elements which fall under the jurisdiction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arrangements, will fall to be considered by the Council in due course.

Issues highlighted by the Director of Public Health have informed the proposals and formed a very useful tool for negotiating and shaping the scheme. However, many of these issues will have more relevance and fall to be considered at the more detailed reserved matters stages.

The proposed development will deliver a significant proportion of the market and affordable housing that is likely to be required to meet Taunton's housing need. The benefits of the housing should be given significant weight in the determination of this application. However, the benefits of the delivery of the affordable housing is somewhat mitigated due to the viability considerations which arise as a result of the costs of the infrastructure mitigation. The site does, however, have the potential to deliver housing within the next 5 years, subject to additional consents, and the early delivery of the housing also attracts considerable weight in favour of a grant of planning permission.

The development would result in the loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and this should be given moderate weight in any decision. The development would also give rise to some material harm to the rural character and appearance of the area and this should also be given moderate weight. However, it is a fact that Taunton is surrounded by best and most versatile agricultural land and there are few options for growth that wouldn't impact in some way. In any event, it is considered that these harms are more than outweighed by the benefit of the provision of needed housing.

There are a range of benefits to be gained from this development, not least the early delivery of much needed housing. There are no material considerations that would, either separately or in combination, outweigh the benefits brought by this proposal. Therefore it is considered to be justifiable to recommend the granting of planning permission, but subject to the conditions, informatives and legal agreement referenced at the beginning of this report.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Contact Officer: Mr J Burton**

# Appendix 1

## Draft Infrastructure Schedule - Staplegrove East

Item	Normal development Cost	CIL	Section 106	Comments
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Primary School (including Early Years preschool)		X		
Secondary Education		X		Application being submitted for a Free School
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
<b>ON-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS</b>				
Spine Road	X			
Bus stops	X			
Pedestrian Cycle routes	X			
Travel Plan			X	
<b>OFF-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS</b>				
Silk Mills junction improvements			X	
Cross Keys signalised junction			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction signalisation			X	
Improvements to Kingston Road Gyratory (Cheddon Road/Priorswood Road/St Andrews Road/Kingston Road/Greenway Road/Station Road/Station Approach)			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane management works and speed reduction measures.			X	
Increased level of bus services			X	
Improved connecting cycle routes			X	
MOVA at Junction 25			X	A requirement of Highways England. Still being negotiated.
Manor Road / Staplegrove Road signals (SCOOT)			X	
Improvements to pedestrian links to Taunton Academy			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Improvements to Gypsy Lane cycle route			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
<b>OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE</b>				
<b>ON-SITE</b>				
Green Infrastructure	X			
Allotments		X		Provided on-site
Northern Green Corridor	X			
One Junior sports pitch		X		Provided on-site

<b>OFF-SITE</b>				
Active Recreation Spaces - Sports Pitches		X		Contribution from West-site to enable delivery of pitches
Northern tree belts (habitat replacement planting for bats )	X			Provided on-site - secured via planning condition
<b>SOCIAL &amp; COMMUNITY</b>				
<b>ON-SITE</b>				
Affordable Housing			X	Provided on-site
<b>OFF-SITE</b>				
Community Hall Building		X		Contribution from West-site
Health		X		
Libraries		X		
Arts and Culture		X		
<b>PLAY EQUIPMENT AND SPORTS FACILITIES</b>				
<b>ON-SITE</b>				
LAPs			X	Provided on-site
LEAPS			X	Provided on-site
Play Equipment Maintenance Costs			X	Private Management Company - Service Charge
Open Space Maintenance Costs			X	Private Management Company - Service Charge
<b>OFF-SITE</b>				
Local sports facilities		X		
<b>ECOLOGY</b>				
On site ecology mitigations e.g Installing bird and bat boxes	X			Provided on-site - Secured via planning condition
<b>FLOOD ATTENUATION</b>				
Attenuation Areas	X			Provided on-site - Secured via planning condition
<b>OTHER</b>				
Overhead power lines	X			To be undergrounded (subject to agreement).
Archaeological mitigations	X			On-site - Secured via planning condition



34/16/0007

PTARMIGAN STAPLEGROVE LTD

**Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for a residential-led, mixed use urban extension to include up to 713 dwellings, 1 ha of employment land comprising use classes B1(a) (up to a maximum of 2500sqm), B1(b), B1(c), B2, B8 together with green infrastructure, landscaping, play areas, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and associated works. An internal spine road is proposed to connect the A358 Staplegrove Road and Taunton Road at land at Staplegrove (West), Taunton**

Location: STREET RECORD, STAPLEGROVE ROAD, STAPLEGROVE,  
TAUNTON

Grid Reference: 321112.127035

Outline Planning Permission

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## Recommendation

The decision to GRANT OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION be delegated to the Assistant Director Planning and Environment subject to the planning conditions recommended below and planning obligations under s106 to secure the following items to the Council's satisfaction:

- A minimum of 15% affordable housing
- Off site highway works at the following junctions
  - A358 site access signalised junction
  - Kingston Road site access signalised junction
  - Silk Mills signalised junction
  - Cross Keys signalised junction
  - Corkscrew Lane/Hope Corner Lane/Kingston Road junction improvement and signalisation
  - Improvements to Kingston Road Gyratory (Cheddon Road/Priorswood Road/St Andrews Road/Kingston Road/Greenway Road/Station Road/Station Approach)
  - Improvement measures for Gipsy Lane
  - Improvements to pedestrian links to Taunton Academy
- The down-grading of the temporary access to phase 1 housing off Corkscrew Lane to a pedestrian and cycle route only.
- A technology package (MOVA/SCOOT) for the following junctions
  - Silk Mills Junction
  - Development access on the A358
  - Cross keys Junction (if required)
  - Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Junction
- Traffic management works for Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane
- Travel Plan
- Improvements to bus services serving the site
- Delivery and timing of spine road
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular shortcuts

- On site pedestrian and cycle network
- Details of the land transfer arrangements for the required primary school site.
- The timing of access to a serviced school site for both construction and operational purposes
- Provision of land for on-site play equipment, sports facilities and allotments (in accordance with the Council's adopted standards).
- Management and maintenance of the proposed landscape woodland buffer and SUDS features.
- Relationship with the Staplegrove west application (LPA ref: 34/16/0007).
- A review mechanism to allow for more than 15% affordable housing, if the scheme becomes more profitable than currently argued or if the Council is successful in bids to the Government for funding under the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

*Should it not prove possible to agree these obligations the matter will need to be reported back to this Committee for further consideration.*

### **Recommended Conditions (if applicable)**

1. Approval of the details of the layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping of each phase of the Development (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development in that phase is commenced and the development of that phase shall (unless otherwise agreed with writing by the local planning authority) be carried out as approved. Application for approval of the reserved matters of the first phase shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Application for the final phase of the development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority not later than the expiration of ten years from the date of this permission. Each phase of the development hereby permitted shall be begun, not later than the expiration of two years from the final approval of the reserved matters for that phase, or in the case of approval on different dates, the final approval of the last such matter to be approved.

Reason: This is an outline permission and these matters have been reserved for the subsequent approval of the local planning authority in accordance with the provisions of S92 (2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by S51 (2) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. For those matters not reserved for later approval, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

14-017-110B\_ Site Plan  
14017\_407E\_Proposed Masterplan

ITL0047-SK-019 RD\_ Proposed amendments to Silk Mills Junction  
0781-GA-045-RD\_Kingston Road Site Access Signalised Junction Option  
ITL10047-SK-029 RB\_Access from Corkscrew Lane Restricted Access  
Option

3

ITL10047-SK-031- Access from Corkscrew Lane Restricted Access

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. An application for approval of reserved matters shall not be submitted until there has been submitted the Local Planning Authority a phasing and place-making strategy covering the general locations and phasing of the delivery of housing, infrastructure, transport links and community facilities within the whole Development. This strategy shall also include the timing and delivery of the agreed highway improvements. The Phasing Strategy shall set out information on how the delivery of these elements will be integrated through green infrastructure to ensure that a cohesive and high quality place is created. The strategy should identify any potential opportunities for the consultation with or the involvement of the local community or other stakeholders in the delivery and/or maintenance of community facilities. Thereafter each application for approval of reserved matters shall include an explanation of how the development of the phase or sub phase it covers relates to the phasing strategy of the overall Development. The development should be carried out in accordance with the approved phasing and placemaking strategy unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure comprehensive development in controlled phases and the creation of a high quality place, in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, policies SS6 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

4. An application for approval of reserved matters for a phase or sub phase shall not be submitted until there has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority a Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide for the Neighbourhood Area to which that application for approval of reserved matters relates. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide shall be accompanied by a statement explaining how it accords with the Masterplan approved by this outline consent and the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief as approved by Taunton Deane Borough Council in December 2015. If they do not accord with these documents then reasons for this will need to be given. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide shall provide information on the proposed arrangement of development blocks, streets and spaces for the Neighbourhood Area to which they relate. The Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide should demonstrate how the Neighbourhood Area will function and explain its overall character and grain.

REASON: To ensure high standards of urban design and comprehensively planned development to accord with policies DM1 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (March 2012) and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

5. An application for approval of reserved matters shall not be submitted until there has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority, an Appearance Palette which includes the phase or sub phase to which that application for approval of reserved matters relates. The Appearance Palette shall include details of individual character areas, guidance on building design, building materials, surface materials, street furniture and tree species for the phase or sub phase to which it relates. Any subsequent revisions to an approved Appearance Palette shall be subject to the approval of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure high standards of urban design and comprehensively planned development to accord with policies DM1 and DM4 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (March 2012) and policies D7 and D9 of the adopted Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

6. No development hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the written scheme of archaeological investigation shall be implemented in accordance with its terms.

REASON: Areas of the site have been identified as of possible archaeological interest and therefore as requiring further archaeological investigation, excavation and recording proportionate to their significance, in accordance with section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy and policy ENV4 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

7. Prior to the commencement of each phase of the Development, with the exception of any required enabling works, earthworks and access, a foul water drainage strategy for that phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Wessex Water acting as the sewerage undertaker. The foul water drainage strategy shall include appropriate arrangements for the agreed points of connection and the capacity improvements required to serve the phase to which it relates. The foul water drainage strategy shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details and to a timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that proper provision is made for sewerage of the site and that the development does not increase the risk of sewer flooding to downstream property, in accordance with policy DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

8. Prior to the commencement of each phase of the Development, with the exception of any required enabling works, earthworks and access, details of the surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles together with a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage strategy shall ensure that surface water runoff post development is attenuated on site and discharged at a rate of 2 l/s/ha or greenfield runoff rates, whichever rate is lower. Such works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. These details shall include: -
  - (a) Evidence that an appropriate right of discharge for surface water and any necessary improvements has been obtained;
  - (b) Details of the drainage during construction of that phase or sub phase and information of maintenance of drainage systems during construction of this phase;
  - (c) Information about the design storm period and intensity, discharge rates and volumes (both pre and post development), temporary storage facilities, means of access for maintenance (6 metres minimum), the methods employed to delay and control surface water discharged from the site, and the measures taken to prevent flooding and pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters;
  - (d) Any works required off site to ensure adequate discharge of surface water without causing flooding or pollution (which should include refurbishment of existing culverts and headwalls or removal of unused culverts where relevant);
  - (e) Identification of all future land-use limitations, ownership, operation and maintenance arrangements for the works over the lifetime of the scheme;
  - (f) Flood water exceedance routes both on and off site, note, no part of the site must be allowed to flood during any storm up to and including the 1 in 30 event, flooding during storm events in excess of this including the 1 in 100yr (plus 30% allowance for climate change) must be controlled within the designed exceedance routes demonstrated to prevent flooding or damage to properties;
  - (g) A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management company or maintenance by a Residents' Management Company and / or any

other arrangements to secure the operation and maintenance to an approved standard and working condition throughout the lifetime of the development;

- (h) An agreed timetable for delivery.

The approved scheme shall meet the requirements of both the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling of each phase it shall be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that relevant parts of the scheme have been completed in accordance with the details and timetable agreed. The scheme shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and more generally sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015), policies CP1 (c & f) and CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012) and policy I4 of the Taunton Deane adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (December 2016).

9. No phase or sub phase of development shall commence (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental and Traffic Management Plan for that phase or sub phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. In discharging this condition the following information shall be supplied:
- (a) Locations for the storage of all plant, machinery and materials including oils and chemicals to be used in connection with the construction of that phase or sub phase;
  - (b) Construction vehicle routes to and from site including any off site routes for the disposal of excavated material;
  - (c) Construction delivery hours;
  - (d) Expected number of construction vehicles per day;
  - (e) Car parking for contractors;
  - (f) A scheme to encourage the use of Public Transport amongst contractors ;and
  - (g) Measures to avoid traffic congestion impacting upon the Strategic Road network.
  - (h) Details of all bunds, fences and other physical protective measures to be placed on the site including the time periods for placing and retaining such measures;
  - (i) The control and removal of spoil and wastes;
  - (j) A scheme of measures to prevent the pollution of surface and groundwater arising from the storage of plant and materials and other

construction activities; the scheme should include details of the following:

- Site security.
  - Fuel oil storage, bunding, delivery and use.
  - How both minor and major spillage will be dealt with.
  - Containment of silt/soil contaminated run-off.
  - Disposal of contaminated drainage, including water pumped from excavations.
  - Site induction for workforce highlighting pollution prevention and awareness. Invitation for tenders for sub-contracted works must include a requirement for details of how the above will be implemented.
- (k) The proposed hours of operation of construction activities;
- (l) The frequency, duration and means of operation involving demolitions, excavations, drilling, piling, and any concrete production;
- (m) Sound attenuation measures incorporated to reduce noise at source;
- (n) Details of measures to be taken to reduce the generation of dust; and(o) Specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice (p) Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS]

The agreed Construction Environmental and Traffic Management Plan shall thereafter be implemented in full.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety, to protect the amenities of nearby properties during the construction of the Development and to protect the natural and water environment from pollution in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

10. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, then no further development shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority to, a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

REASON: To protect controlled waters in accordance with policy CP8 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

11. Applications for Reserved Matters approval shall include a hard and soft landscaping scheme for the phase or sub phase of the Development to which it relates. The hard and soft landscaping scheme shall include for the phase or sub phase to which it relates details of the landscaping; details of the surface treatment of the open parts of the site; a programme of implementation; and a planting schedule include numbers, density, size,

species and positions of all new trees and shrubs. The landscaping/planting scheme shown on the submitted plan shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development phase.

REASON: To ensure provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme, and to ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policies CP8 and DM1 of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Strategy.

12. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, or at such other time as agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: To ensure provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme, and to ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policies CP8 and DM1 of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Core Strategy.

13. Before each phase of the Development is commenced the following shall in respect of that phase be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:
  - (a) A plan showing the location of and allocating a reference number to each existing tree on the part of the site within that phase which has a stem with a diameter, measured over the bark at a point 1.5 metres above ground level, exceeding 75 mm, showing which trees are to be retained, the crown spread of each retained tree and which are to be removed;
  - (b) Details of the species, height, trunk diameter at 1.5m above ground level, age, vigour, canopy spread and root protection area of each tree identified in the plan prepared pursuant to paragraph (a);
  - (c) Details of any proposed topping or lopping of any retained tree, or of any tree on land adjacent to the site;
  - (d) Details of any proposed alterations in existing ground levels, and of the position of any proposed excavation, [within the crown spread of any retained tree or of any tree on land adjacent to the site];
  - (e) Details of the specification and position of fencing and of any other measures to be taken for the protection of any retained tree from damage before or during the course of development.

The development of that phase shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. In this condition "retained tree" means an



existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the plan referred to in paragraph (a) above.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely impact upon the landscape quality or the value of important tree groups in accordance with Policy CP8 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

14. No works (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) shall be commenced on any phase of the development hereby permitted until details of a wildlife strategy (incorporating an Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS] and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [LEMP]) to protect and enhance that phase of the development for wildlife has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Strategy shall demonstrate how the long-term conservation of new and retained environmental resources, including habitats and species of biodiversity value, shall be secured and shall include arrangements for implementation responsibilities for the operation of the Strategy following completion of development of each phase or sub phase of the development. It will need to meet the requirements of any Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licences. The strategy shall be based on the advice of all the submitted landscape and ecology reports to date including those contained within the Environmental Statement (dated February 2016) including the Ecological Report submitted by A A Environmental Ltd, Environmental Statement Addendum (dated December 2016) and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (May 2016), and any other up to date surveys and include -
  1. An Ecological Construction Method Statement (ECMS) containing details of protective measures to include method statements to avoid impacts on all wildlife especially protected species during all stages of development;
  2. Details of measures to prevent pollution of all water courses on or near the site
  3. Details of the timing of works to avoid periods of work when protected species could be harmed by disturbance.
  4. Arrangements to secure an Ecological Clerk of Works on site.
  5. Measures for the enhancement of places of rest for protected species.
  6. Details of a sensitive lighting strategy.
  7. Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.
  8. A commitment to commence planting of replacement habitat no later than day one of each phase of the development.

The Strategy shall cover management of the whole site in perpetuity from completion of the works and once approved the works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timing of the

works. No part of the development on the phase concerned shall be occupied until the scheme for the maintenance and provision of the mitigation planting and maintenance of the hibernacula, bat, dormice and bird boxes and related accesses have been fully implemented. Thereafter the new planting and the wildlife resting places and agreed accesses shall be permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [LEMP] and an Ecological Construction Method Statement [ECMS] are required to ensure that valued ecological features are not harmed by the Development as the habitats need to be maintained functionally for the life of the development in order that Favourable Conservation Status of the affected populations is maintained, and to ensure net gains in biodiversity are delivered in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Taunton Deane adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028. This is also a requirement of the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

15. No more than 12 months prior to the commencement of works on a phase of the Development in which breeding sites or resting places of European Protected Species may be present, updated surveys for that phase shall be undertaken. The species in question include but are not necessarily limited to:
  - (a) Bats;
  - (b) Dormice;
  - (c) Great crested newts; and
  - (d) Otters

The survey results shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority together with details of any required mitigation measures and the appropriate mechanism for delivery of such measures.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

16. A habitat enhancement area of a minimum of either i) 7.11 hectares (without the Staplegrove East application coming forward) or ii) 6.83 hectares (with Staplegrove East application being delivered) of replacement habitat will be required respectively in accordance with the agreed Habitat Regulations Assessment (May 2016). The replacement habitat shall be of accessible woodland, ponds and species rich meadow is created, which is accessible to lesser horseshoe bats. The layout of and a planting schedule for the habitat creation / enhancement of this open space will be submitted to and agreed with Taunton Deane Borough Council prior to any work commencing on site (apart from any associated enabling works, earthworks and/or

access). This enhancement will be planted within the first available planting season (October to March) following permission, unless otherwise agreed with the Borough Council in writing.

Reason: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

17. A bat house for lesser horseshoe bats will be constructed on the northern boundary, prior to any work commencing on site. The design and location of the bat roost shall first have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and shall remain in place at all times thereafter.

REASON: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment In the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

18. Before any development takes place, the northern and western boundary hedgerows shall be retained in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, giving the position, species and health of all such hedgerows and where necessary details of planting to infill existing gaps. These hedgerows shall then remain in accordance with these details and any parts of the hedgerow which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: This is a requirement of the approved Habitats Regulation Assessment in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

19. Once the first phase of development has commenced, ecological monitoring of the whole site, for a period of time to be agreed between the Local Planning Authority and the applicant, shall be undertaken.

Reason: To ensure that the long-term management of the site is informed, to identify where the existing maintenance regime requires modification, to assess the efficacy of the EPS licenses and also to comply with the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

20. The proposals hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the approved Habitats Regulations Assessment. Where further information is specified to be provided by any of these requirements, this information shall have been provided to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before the relevant part(s) of the development is/are commenced and shall include a timetable for implementation of the measures. The agreed works shall then be implemented in full strictly in accordance with the approved plans and/or documentation and remain as such at all times thereafter.

REASON: Natural England concludes that the Test of Likely Significance (“Habitats Regulations Assessment”) has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC. Natural England agrees with the conclusions in the HRA and supports them. However, they conclude that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC. On this basis, if these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and Natural England would object on that basis.

21. No external lighting shall be placed on site or operated in any phase of the Development until a Lighting Strategy for Biodiversity for that phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall incorporate the following measures -
- (a) Identify those areas/features of the site within that phase or subphase that are particularly sensitive for bats, dormice and otters and that are vulnerable to light disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging;
  - (b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications showing Lux levels down to an appropriate level) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.
  - (c) Street lighting will be directed so as to avoid light spillage and pollution on habitats used by light sensitive bats and other species. The applicant will demonstrate that all bat corridors and feeding habitat will not exceed agreed appropriate level of illumination, in accordance with the recommended light level for horseshoe bats in corridors through development (Natural England, 2010). Shields and other methods of reducing light spill will be used where necessary to achieve the required light levels;

- (d) Lighting will be of the soft white LED type with optics that are highly directional;
- (e) Paths within the enhanced habitat areas will not be lit as these are primarily designed to replace the value of the habitat lost that would otherwise constitute a potential significant effect on the Hestercombe House SAC.
- (f) Properties with gardens adjacent to habitat used by lesser horseshoe bats shall have their boundaries fixed with a 1.8m high closed boarded fence to minimise incidental light spill from uncontrolled lighting and to prevent removal of habitat to extend gardens.
- (g) There will be no routine night-time working during the construction stage of the development.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy and shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy at all times thereafter.

REASON: In order to minimise the effects on bats and other light sensitive creatures in the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework, ODPM Circular 06/2005, Policy CP8 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (May 2016).

22. The proposed estate roads, footways, footpaths, tactile paving, cycleways, bus stops/bus laybys, verges, junctions, street lighting, sewers, drains, retaining walls, service routes, surface water outfall, vehicle overhang margins, embankments, visibility splays, accesses, carriageway gradients, drive gradients, car, motorcycle and cycle parking and street furniture shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing, before their construction begins. For this purpose, plans and sections, indicating as appropriate, the design, layout, levels, gradients, materials and method of construction shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority before the commencement of each phase (or sub-phase) of the development.

REASON: To ensure the provision of appropriate access and highway safety for all road users and pedestrians in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

23. The proposed roads, including footpaths and where applicable turning spaces and cycle way connections, shall be constructed in such a manner as to ensure that each dwelling, before it is occupied, shall be served by a properly consolidated and surfaced footpath and carriageway to at least base course level between the dwelling and existing highway.

REASON: To ensure the provision of appropriate access and highway safety for all road users and pedestrians in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

24. Construction of the internal Spine Road is to be completed in full within 5 years of the first occupation or a maximum of 200 of the residential units hereby approved being occupied, whichever is achieved first. No individual phase of the development shall be occupied or brought into use until the part of the Spine Road that provides access to that phase has been constructed in accordance with plans that shall previously have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that the spine road will eventually link between the two approved points of access into the urban extension, which it has been established is required in order to prevent traffic congestion and danger on the highway elsewhere on the local road network, particularly along Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane and in Taunton town centre. This is in accordance with policy CP6 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

25. To enable the Spine Road to be constructed, a first phase of development is to be located to the north of Corkscrew Lane with a temporary access to be taken from Corkscrew Lane. The access road is temporary and will close to vehicles upon completion of the Spine Road or within five years of first occupation, whichever is achieved first.

REASON: To ensure that there is a reasonable amount of funding available to allow the spine road to eventually link between the two approved points of access on to the A358 and the Taunton Road, but to ensure in the longer term that the temporary access road will become closed to vehicular traffic so as to encourage the use of the spine road as the through route from the A358 in the west to Taunton road in the east.

26. In the interests of sustainable development none of the dwellings in the first phase (as will be agreed by condition 3 of this permission) shall be used or occupied until a network of cycleway and footpath connections has been constructed within the development site as a whole in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of sustainable development and to encourage movement by means other than the motor vehicle in accordance with the principles within the National Planning Policy Guidance and policies SD1, CP1, CP6, CP7, SP1 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

27. In relation to the Spine Road, any access shall ensure that there shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 300 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 43 metres either side of the access. Such visibility shall

be fully provided before any junction(s) with the Spine Road is/(are) brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.

REASON: In order to ensure that any future accesses onto or from the spine road have adequate visibility, in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Authority, to ensure accordance with the County Council's standing orders on highway design and in accordance with policies CP6 and DM1 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

28. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied prior to the implementation of the approved Travel Plan. Those parts of the approved Travel Plan that are identified therein as being capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained therein.

REASON: To ensure that the development offers a wide range of travel choices to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment.

29. Before the completion of the proposed spine road, traffic calming measures for Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall then be implemented in full, in accordance with the approved scheme(s) and remain in place in full working order as approved at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure an improved flow and speed of traffic along this road.

30. No dwelling in any phase or sub-phase hereby permitted, shall be occupied until footpath connections have been constructed within the phase or sub-phase in accordance with a scheme that shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of sustainable development, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Guidance and policies DM1 and DM4 of the adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

31. No development shall commence on any phase until a proposed layout scheme to include the provision of access to other parts of the Staplegrove site as identified in policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocation and Development Management Plan, has been submitted for approval in writing to the Local Planning Authority. The layout scheme will be in a form that is adequate to accommodate public transport, vehicles, cycleways and footpath linkages for the future development of the Staplegrove site. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to ensure that other land that may come forward for development within the parameters of policy TAU2 of the Site Allocation and Development Management Plan are not unduly prejudiced.

32. The applicant shall ensure that all construction vehicles leaving the site are in such condition as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. In particular (but without prejudice to the foregoing), efficient means shall be installed, maintained and employed for cleaning the wheels of all lorries leaving the site, details of which shall have been agreed in advance in writing by the Local Planning Authority and fully implemented prior to commencement of development and thereafter maintained until the site has been fully completed.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure environmental protection.

#### Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and entered into pre-application discussions to enable the grant of planning permission.
2. WILDLIFE AND THE LAW . The protection afforded to wildlife under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and any activity undertaken on the tree(s) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

**BREEDING BIRDS.** Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and if discovered must not be disturbed. If works are to be carried out during the breeding season (from February to August, possibly later) then the tree(s) should be checked for nesting birds before work begins.

**BATS.** The applicant and contractors must be aware that all bats are fully protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012, also known as the Habitat Regulations. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to structures or places of shelter or protection used by bats, or to disturb bats whilst they are using these places.

Trees with features such as rot holes, split branches or gaps behind loose bark, may be used as roost sites for bats. Should a bat or bats be encountered while work is being carried out on the tree(s), work must cease immediately and advice must be obtained from the Governments advisers



on wildlife, Natural England (Tel. 0845 1300 228). Bats should preferably not be handled (and not unless with gloves) but should be left in situ, gently covered, until advice is obtained.

3. The condition relating to wildlife requires the submission of information to protect species. The Local Planning Authority will expect to see a detailed method statement for each phase of the development clearly stating how wildlife and their habitats will be protected through the development process and to be provided with a mitigation proposal that will maintain favourable status for these species that are affected by this development proposal.
4. Dormice, bats and possibly great crested newts are known to use the site as identified in submitted ecological surveys. The species concerned are European Protected Species within the meaning of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. If the local population of European Protected Species are affected in a development, a licence must be obtained from Natural England in accordance with the above regulations. Natural England requires that the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that derogation from the Habitats Directive is justified prior to issuing such a licence. It should be noted that approval of this outline application, does not mean that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.
5. It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and the developer should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.
6. Nesting birds are present on site and all operatives on site must be appropriately briefed on their potential presence. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and if discovered must not be disturbed.
7. The applicant is hereby advised to note that the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Avon and Somerset Police would be pleased to work with them at the detailed design stage in order to 'design out' crime and disorder in this major mixed use redevelopment.
8. The applicants are advised to formulate all physical security specifications of the dwellings i.e. doorsets, windows, security lighting, intruder alarm, cycle storage etc. in accordance with the police approved 'Secured by Design' award scheme, full details of which are available on the SBD website – [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)
9. Development, insofar as it affects Public Rights Of Way, should not be started until, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until, the necessary (stopping up/diversion) Order has come into effect. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with.

10. The health and safety of walkers must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of the footpath, but only to a standard suitable for pedestrians. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of the footpath resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.
11. If it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from Somerset County Council Rights of Way Group.

- A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
- New furniture being needed along a PROW.
- Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
  - Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW .

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would make a PROW less convenient for continued public use (or) create a hazard to users of a PROW then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided.

## Proposal

This application seeks outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for a residential-led, mixed-use urban extension to include up to 713 dwellings, 1ha of employment land comprising use classes B1 (a) (up to a maximum of 2500sqm), B1 (b), B1 (c), B2, B8 together with green infrastructure, landscaping, play areas, sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and associated works. An internal spine road is proposed to connect the A358 Staplegrove Road and Taunton Road.

This application is known as the Staplegrove (West) proposal because it sits alongside the concurrent application for Staplegrove (East). The two proposals together comprise the Staplegrove urban extension that is referenced in planning policy SS6 of the adopted Core Strategy and which is further detailed in policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. In order to ensure a comprehensive masterplanning process, the applicant has been working jointly with the promoters for the eastern part of the allocation. This collaborative approach is intended to ensure the comprehensive planning and delivery of the site ensuring the timely delivery of the spine road and other key supporting infrastructure. The delivery of the internal spine road and its associated access points is a key requirement of both the masterplans for the West and East parts of the site. In recognition of this and to take a precautionary approach in the unlikely scenario whereby one or other of the applications does not come forward, the full length of the spine road has been included in both the planning applications (together with its associated works such as drainage and buffer planting). Furthermore, the Environmental Impact Assessment has addressed both the scenarios of 'Comprehensive Development' whereby both the applications come forward together and also a sensitivity test scenario, referred to as 'Without Staplegrove East' which addresses the unlikely scenario that the eastern part of the application does not come forward within the same timeframe.

The application submission includes the following documents:

- Planning Statement;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Affordable Housing Statement;
- Section 106 Draft Heads of Terms;
- An Environmental Statement (ES) required because the proposal is EIA development, which includes -
  - Environmental Statement Non-Technical Summary
  - Volume 1: Environmental Statement and Volume 2: Environmental Statement Technical Appendices including: Socio-Economic assessment
  - Ecology and Nature Conservation assessment including biodiversity surveys

Landscape and Visual Impact assessment  
Lighting assessment  
Transport and Access assessment including Travel Plan  
Air Quality assessment  
Noise and Vibration assessment  
Water and Flooding assessment including Flood Risk Assessment  
Ground Conditions including land contamination assessment  
Cultural Heritage and Archaeological assessment  
Agricultural assessment

The proposals for Staplegrove West aim to provide a sustainable new community comprising of housing as well as employment land, new public spaces and facilities for the community within a landscape-led environment. As such, the proposal includes new areas of public open space, parks, cycle and pedestrian routes, children's play areas and a multi-use sports pitch. The development is would be bordered by woodland buffer planting and retained hedgerows to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape as well as providing a range of ecological features to support local species.

In November 2016, the applicants submitted a viability assessment in support of their application. They maintained that Staplegrove West has a number of constraints and abnormal costs that contribute to it not being a typical development site which have, therefore, impacted on the site's viability. The submitted viability report tested several scenarios, most of which showed deficits in their appraisals. The end result was that the applicant has made a case for proceeding with the application on the basis of providing 10% affordable housing with a 50/50 tenure split. The Council has had the figures and assessments independently checked.

In December 2016, amendments were made to proposed masterplan:

- (a) The proposed Kingston Road roundabout, which connected the Spine Road to Kingston Road has been removed and replaced with a signalised junction;
- (b) The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, north of Clifford Avenue, has now been removed and replaced with a cycle-only access;
- (c) The addition of a vehicular connection road from the Spine Road to the residential parcel north of Corkscrew Lane;
- (d) The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, south of the green wedge, has now been removed.

The following chapters of the original Environmental Statement have been updated to reflect these changes and a new submission was made and advertised under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. However the overall conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment remain the same:

- Chapter 7 Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Chapter 9 Lighting

- Chapter 10 Transport and Access
- Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 18 Summary of Effects and Conclusions
- Non-Technical Summary

In addition the following further technical information was prepared since the application was first submitted and has been included within the technical appendices:

Chapter 1 Introduction:

- Explanatory notes of cumulative sites assessment

Chapter 7 Ecology and Nature Conservation:

- Updated Staplegrove East Bat Survey

Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual Impact

- Updated Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plans

Chapter 10 Transport and Access:

- Updated Transport Assessment Addendum
- Updated Travel Plan
- Updated Technical Appendices

## Site Description

The application site has an overall area of just under 57 hectares of greenfield land located to the north of Staplegrove, north west of the urban area of Taunton, Somerset. The application site falls within Staplegrove Parish and Ward. This application is part of a wider allocation site forming the North Taunton urban extension and falling partially within the parishes of Kingston St Mary to the north and Cheddon Fitzpaine to the east. The allocated urban extension straddles the southern edges of the Quantock Hills which overlooks the broad valley of the River Tone.

The A358 Staplegrove Road runs east to west along the western and southern boundaries of the site. To the west it connects with the A3065 Silk Mills Lane via a roundabout junction known as the 'Silk Mills Roundabout' and then subsequently the B3227 via another roundabout junction known as the 'Cross Keys Roundabout'.

The A358 continues to the north west of Taunton providing a route towards Minehead, whilst to the east it provides routes into the centre of Taunton and then on to Junction 25 of the M5.

The application site is bound to the south by the Staplegrove Village, to the north by open countryside and to the east fields that comprise the adjoining Staplegrove east site. At the eastern boundary of the site adjacent to Whitmore Lane is a small hamlet of several detached properties set within large, mature gardens. At the western boundary is Staplegrove Lodge and Stillman Butchers with the 'Back Stream' watercourse further beyond to the west. The majority of the application site is located immediately to the south of Rag Hill, a shallow, but distinctive ridge that runs in a broadly south-west to north-east direction. The fields within the site descend gently southwards towards the existing urban edge from high points along the ridge line of approximately 47m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to approximately 39m AOD where it meets Whitmore Lane.

The site comprises a series of large, irregularly shaped, agricultural fields bounded by mature hedgerows, fences and a number of drainage ditches. The only buildings located within the application site are at Staplegrove Farm. These consist of a small, modern bungalow (to be retained) and a collection of farm sheds and stables.

Two sets of pylons and overhead lines traverse the application site, the pylons forming a prominent feature from many viewpoints. Two pylons are located on Rag Hill immediately to the north of Staplegrove Road, with a further six located within the site area, before they exit to the north of the Application Site boundary. The proposals will involve the relocation of these pylons underground.

The site itself does not have a specific historic designation, but there are a number of buildings surrounding the site of heritage interest. The south west of the site is adjacent to the Staplegrove Conservation Area which covers a small area of Staplegrove Village along Manor Road and includes a number of listed buildings.

Grade II listed Staplegrove Lodge is located to the western boundary and the 16th/17th century cottages of Slapes and Smokey are situated to the north of the site.

## Relevant Planning History

This current proposal arises from the Framework Masterplan which was considered by Full Council at their meeting on 15th December 2015. It was resolved that:-

- (1) The North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief be agreed as the basis for development with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the junction between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application; and that
- (2) Officers write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-
  - (i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;
  - (ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists;
  - (iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;
  - (iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;
  - (v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development;
  - (vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
  - (vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;
  - (viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;

- (ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and
- (x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

As adopted Council policy, the Masterplan and the associated recommendations now form a material consideration for any planning application on the Staplegrove broad location site.

Also relevant is the Staplegrove (East) application, which is concurrent and is detailed on this agenda under LPA reference 34/16/0014. This proposal seeks Outline permission (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 915 residential units, a primary school, 1 ha of employment land, local centre, open space including allotments and sports pitches, green infrastructure, landscaping, woodland planting, sustainable drainage systems and associated works; including provision of an internal spine road to connect A358 Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road on land at Staplegrove (East), Taunton.



## Consultation Responses

### *CHEDDON FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL –*

*(Original comments received 14th March 2016)*

The Parish Council of Cheddon Fitzpaine is pleased to support the higher spine route for this development in connection at Kingston Road which abuts the Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish boundary. This proposed road and roundabout will assist in the potential link to Nerrols Drive. The Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council is pleased to note that the landscaping and proposed tree planting within the red planning boundary surrounds the area earmarked for Light Industrial Use (though this is not in this application).

*(Additional comments received 15th March 2016)*

The Parish Council of Cheddon Fitzpaine is pleased to support the higher spine route for this development in connection at Kingston Road which abuts the Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish boundary. This proposed road and roundabout will assist in the potential link to Nerrols Drive.

However, concern was expressed that once the traffic exits the spine road, they have two options to carry on their journey - 1. Travel up to Kingston and across to Upper Cheddon and carry on passed Hestercombe & South Lodge, and 2. Travel down Kingston Road, and then turn into Hope Lane, which is a narrow road, and constrains traffic. Neither of these routes are suitable for an enhanced upper spine road just ending.

The Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council is pleased to note that the landscaping and proposed tree planting within the red planning boundary surrounds the area earmarked for Light Industrial Use (though this is not in this application).

### *KINGSTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL –*

*(original comments dated 14th March 2016)*

Kingston St Mary Parish Council wish to voice their strong objection to aspects of this outline planning application submitted by Ptarmigan Staplegrove Ltd.

1. We feel it is deplorable that the time limit allowed by planners for our response does not enable us to consider the proposals for the entire site at the same time. Our reply has to be returned before we have seen the outline proposals for the eastern side being prepared by PM Asset Management.

2. It is the eastern side of this proposed development that causes us the greatest concern because of its potential impact on the lives of residents in Kingston St. Mary particularly as a result of the additional traffic it will generate on local roads. The biggest problem, we believe, is going to be the significant increase in traffic resulting from the cars driven by residents' living in the proposed 1626 houses and those working in the employment areas of the proposed development, and contractors' vehicles during a five-year build period.

3. Kingston Road is an increasingly busy road used not just by residents of our parish but by a growing number of people from West Somerset and Sedgemoor to travel to and from Taunton for work/leisure. The number of commuters using this

route is likely to increase as work on the nuclear station at Hinkley Point gets under way.

4. If this development goes ahead, working on an average of one car per household on the eastern side of the site, an average of at least 1,000 vehicle movements will be using exit on to Kingston Road (wrongly labelled as Taunton Road in the application documents and maps) which for most of its length is not wide enough for two large vehicles to pass.

5. In addition, according to the current application, the eastern side will include anew 2-form intake primary school ...and a new local centre and community hub with local shops, financial/ professional services, restaurants and cafes, public house, take-away, community hall, a place of worship and car parking – all of which will obviously generate extra traffic.

6. We note that the spine road through the Staplegrove development is to be built in phases. We make no apologies for repeating our demand that this road should be built in its entirety before a single brick is laid. The width of this road (currently given as 6.7 m) should be sufficient to enable it to form part of an eventual Northern Outer Orbital Route around the north of Taunton. To this end and to ensure a smoother flow of traffic, there should be fewer estate roads accessing on to the Spine Road and no houses fronting it to protect the safety of drivers and pedestrians.

7. In order to protect highway safety, the proposed drop down road off Corkscrew Lane/Manor Road which is a narrow road, with several bends and traffic calming measures along it must be removed from the Planning Application. The spine road as noted above, should be built before a single brick is laid.

8. We do not believe this application can be considered in isolation, without reference to the wider implications; its impact on the road network across the north of Taunton that is already gridlocked at peak periods, education, drainage/sewerage systems and GP and hospital services. Flooding regularly happens on the highway network in the vicinity of the proposed development which will only be exacerbated in the future

9. It would appear the number of houses to be built on the whole site, originally given in the TDBC Core Strategy (2011-2028) as between 500 - 1,500, could now be 1,626. The present application is for 713 dwellings and, according to the documents another 913 could be built on the eastern side. We believe the Core Strategy is out of date and needs review in light of the current economic situation which is affecting employment opportunities in Taunton area.

10. On a general point, we believe this development is not necessary, is being built to meet national/regional targets rather than any proven local need and is in the wrong location.

*(Additional comments dated 1st January 2017)*

On balance we would prefer a small roundabout - certainly smaller than the one shown on the original outline plan - especially since it is proposed to have another set of traffic lights (with pedestrian crossing??) just 200 metres away at the junction of Kingston Road and Hope Corner Lane.

Regarding the other amendments to the proposed Staplegrove Development, we would restate our previous position. We believe -

1. This development of 1,600 homes is excessively large - four times the size of the present KSM
2. It is based on forecasts in the out of date Core Strategy which have proved inaccurate.
3. It will not be a sustainable development because most people will be forced to use their cars to get to work since there are no jobs in the area.
4. If it is granted outline permission, the spine road must be built, in its entirety, before any houses are constructed.

*KINGSTON ST. MARY AND STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCILS, Joint letter*

*Dated 14th November 2016.*

We are taking the unusual step of writing directly to you because of the level of anxiety and concern in the communities we represent about the above applications to build a total of 1628 new houses plus a primary school, community centre and business centre, that have been submitted to you for outline approval. We take the view that to allow such a massive development in a rural location, without the necessary supporting infrastructure being in place would be unsound and, some would argue, irresponsible. It would cause immense disruption to the daily lives and well-being of residents and businesses across the whole of the north of Taunton. We believe that, at the very least, a decision on these twin applications should be deferred until the issues raised by many of the expert external consultees, including conservationists, highways, education and health professionals, have been investigated fully and addressed, and the outdated Core Strategy has been reviewed.

This application cannot be considered in isolation, without reference to the wider implications; its impact on the road network across the north of Taunton that is already gridlocked at peak periods, education, water/drainage/sewerage systems and GP and hospital services.

In a recent speech, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid David said: "We need to build more houses, providing they are in the right place and there is appropriate infrastructure and public services to match them." The proposed North Taunton development does not meet this test – and should be postponed until the necessary roads and services are in place.

The Core Strategy 2011-2028, which determined future housing needs, is out of date and urgently needs revision. Employment in Taunton Deane, according to Office of National Statistics, has remained almost static over the past decade and is now approximately the same as when the Core Strategy was being written. The projected increase in jobs has not happened. In fact, the number employed in Taunton Deane has fallen in the last year. A decline that will not be helped by the current uncertain economic climate. There is little or no employment in the north of Taunton, contrary to the aim of locating homes and workplaces closer together. This means residents in this proposed development will have to cross town in order to reach areas of employment and many will probably have to travel outside the Borough, to the growth centres of Exeter, Bristol and Bridgwater. This would result in the North Taunton development becoming a vast, sprawling dormitory township, with little integration with existing communities. The extra commuters will add to

the pressures on an already clogged road network. Hardly a sustainable development!

Our detailed concerns are –

### Traffic congestion

We consider that the calculation made by the promoters that appears to show that the Traffic Impact Assessment of their proposals on the Strategic Highway Network is 'only slight and certainly not severe' cannot possibly be correct. We and many others have called for the spine road to be constructed before any house building is commenced because of the effects this development would have on the roads in the area. This is particularly so in the case of Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane and at the eastern connection to Kingston Road.

The transport infrastructure requirements of TDBC's Policy TAU2 calls for the construction of: 'a new northern link road from the Silk Mills Roundabout on the A358, to Kingston Road, with provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton' and sets out that the masterplan should provide for the 'closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road other than for local access'. It would indeed be sensible to continue the spine road eastwards around Wellsprings Leisure Centre to Cheddon Road and then to connect to the existing length at Nerrols Drive. This would enable much easier access to the motorway, avoiding the town centre, and would solve many of the highway distribution problems associated with the development, particularly at the St Andrew's gyratory system. But it would need to be constructed at the same time as the spine road.

### Education

The additional pupils from the North Taunton development will put extra pressure on existing primary and secondary schools, most of which are already oversubscribed. Since, we understand, the proposed new primary school will not be completed in the first phase of the development, pupils will have to be bussed to other schools in Taunton for four or five years. Adding to the traffic on the road network.

### Health

Existing local GP surgeries and health centres are already under extreme pressure. Additional numbers will only exacerbate the problems and increase the difficulties residents face in getting appointments with their doctor. There will also be increased pressure on Musgrove Park Hospital and a whole range of health services.

### Landscape

Building 1628 houses on mostly prime Best and Most Versatile agricultural land would be criminal and will destroy a magnificent rural aspect on the approach to the Quantock Hills, an area of outstanding natural beauty that is a prime tourist attraction bringing valuable trade to local businesses. We would like to echo the comments made by the Quantock Hills AONB Service about the effect of building on this large area of agricultural land. This land forms part of the vale that offers a clear sense of separation between the urban environment of Taunton and the gateway to the Quantock Hills at Kingston St Mary. Loss of this open land will result

in a marked, visible reduction in the gap between urban environment and a nationally protected landscape – with urban fringe influences e.g. highways infrastructure and urban lighting moving ever closer to the boundary of the AONB.

### Increased Flooding

Staplegrove Parish Council has serious worries about the increased likelihood of flooding in various places due to this North Taunton Development proposal. Flooding has occurred fairly regularly in Lawn Road, at Hillhead Cottages in Rectory Road and to the sports field of Staplegrove Sports Club, due to run-off from the fields to the north during pronounced wet weather. Similarly, flooding at the junction between Whitmore Lane and Corkscrew Lane is perhaps a more frequent event, once again due to the run-off from the fields sloping down to the road from both east and west. This has been known to produce treacherous conditions on freezing nights.

It is recognized that precautions are planned to be designed to cater for the increased occurrence of flooding caused by the proposed schemes with the provision of attenuation ponds and Sustainable Drainage System techniques but we are particularly concerned that the promoters have indicated that they wish to restrict the intended width of the extended Green Wedge by constructing estates on both the east and west edges. Not only does this reduce the principal purpose of the wedge of maintaining the identity and open character of the area for the health and wellbeing of the residents, but also increases the difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory method of flood prevention. This restricted width is very strongly opposed by the Parish Council.

The SADMP adopted an obvious established western boundary for the Green Wedge being the public footpath adjacent to Manor Cottage/Village World with its line of accompanying poplar trees which have Tree Preservation Orders. To the east the boundary was correctly positioned at the top of the sloping ground. The land between these two limits should not be covered with hard impervious building and paving materials as is included in the current proposals.

We understand the need for additional housing but this development is in the wrong place and excessively large. It is many times the size of the existing villages of Staplegrove and Kingston St Mary, both conservation areas, which will be swamped by their larger neighbour and lose their distinctive character. We believe it would be unsound and unacceptable for any TDBC Planning Committee to approve the North Taunton Staplegrove Development given the current concerns and circumstances.

### *STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL*

*(Original comments dated 27th February 2016) –*

1. We are appalled that the two Promoters of the above highly significant development have thought it appropriate to submit their proposals as two parts and at separate times. They have, no doubt, considered that it could be to their advantage to deny the affected people the opportunity, in making their comments, to be able to consider the full details of the whole single scheme at the same time. Presumably this action is permitted by the current procedures and so we ask the

Planning Committee to instruct their planning officers to endeavour to correct this highly undesirable practice by referring the matter to the Government, through their professional body, for the benefit of future applications.

2. To achieve the aims and objectives of the Outline Planning Application it will be paramount to attach strong planning conditions. These conditions should include as a minimum the following:-

- a) vehicular access to Phase 1a of the site to be restricted to Kingston Road.
- b) strict allocation of off road parking for the new home owners and visitors.
- c) house design to be no more than two storeys to take account of the character of the village and to avoid overlooking neighbouring houses.
- d) in view of the topography of the site, better drainage is needed to alleviate the existing and therefore, greater potential run off, once building completed of surface water from the site to stop flooding on the adjoining properties.
- e) any alterations or deviations to the submitted plan would require submission of further plans from the Site Promoter. We will elaborate more fully on these key issues in future correspondence and meetings with yourself, the Site Promoters and the Government Planning Inspector Paul Griffiths.

3. The Parish Council has asked, repeatedly, for the proposed Spine road to be connected to the A358 at the Silk Mills roundabout, bearing in mind that there is a stated requirement (Transport infrastructure requirements of Policy TAU2 - '*A new northern link road from the Silk Mills Roundabout on the A358, to Kingston Road, with provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton.*') for the road to be planned to extend eastwards beyond Kingston Road and to become a ring road around the north of Taunton. The scheme plans show that it is the intention that the roundabout should be replaced by a signal controlled junction of higher capacity, but this should not change the desirability for the Spine road to be connected to this modified layout. The submitted proposals suggest an additional separate signal controlled junction for the Spine road constructed within a distance of only 100m further east. Even assuming its signals are phased with those of the main junction, such a layout is highly undesirable and becomes the 5th set of traffic lights in a length of something less than 500m from Staplegrove Post Office. If this Spine road junction remains then it should have an uncontrolled left turning movement from the A358 on to the Spine road, in the same manner as at the Showell Park junction.

4. We have also asked that the Spine road should be completed before house building begins in order to avoid the virtual gridlock on Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane at peak traffic times anticipated by the residents. The proposals show this not to be the intention of the Promoters as they plan to construct 200 units as Phase 1a with a temporary access directly on to Corkscrew Lane. As the development takes place this could mean that the existing road could have up to 400 additional vehicles from these new occupiers, plus those from the building personnel and material delivery vehicles, plus also those from dwellings being constructed as part of the development at Staplegrove East (a larger number than in the West) together with their construction traffic! The *Environmental Statement, Transport and Accessibility* document lists only two accidents on Manor Road but there have been many additional accidents, particularly adjacent to the sports ground and the junction with Rectory Road, known to local residents which,

presumably, have not always been reported. The SCC Highways Document referred to in Para. 6 below gives details of five further incidences and there have been many more in recent months, including the collision involving two vehicles which became wedged against the recreation ground wall. The only way that one driver and passenger could be released from their car was by cutting the roof off, which was undertaken by the rescue services. Currently, the Parish Council is pursuing an insurance claim against a driver who lost control of his car and hit the recreation ground wall. As he left full contact details the police stated that it was not necessary to report this case. Hence the Parish Council does not accept that *'the changes due to construction traffic would be relatively low and with HGVs required to adhere to routing agreements avoiding inappropriate routes through villages'*. Until the Spine road is completed there are no alternative routes. We consider that the Promoters' proposals will not provide a satisfactory and acceptable temporary solution for traffic on this road and state again that the Spine road should be completed first.

5. The Promoters intend to build the Spine road as Phase 1b, together with an additional 50 units. The documents indicate the timing of these *'developable parcels'* to be as follows:

*Phase 1a Staplegrove West 2018 - 2024 Staplegrove East 2018 – 2023*

The area indicated for the East appears to be very much larger than for Staplegrove West but the number of units to be built in the East in this phase is not given.

*Phase 1b Staplegrove West 2019 – 2020 Staplegrove East 2018 – 2020*

These dates are very confusing and we would appreciate more precise estimated figures please and we wish to stress the need for the Spine road to be completed and the temporary access on to Corkscrew Lane to be closed at the very earliest possible opportunity, if this feature is to be permitted. There is no objection to the access continuing to be used by pedestrians and cyclists.

6. The documents do indicate that *'off site Corkscrew Lane traffic calming improvements by completion of Spine road'* are to be undertaken but, apparently, by when it is possible to remove all the additional traffic on to the Spine road and hence when the problem is thereby much reduced! There needs to be a re-think over the number of estate roads (currently 18) fronting on to the Spine road. These, together with the bus accesses will seriously curtail the flow of traffic along the Spine road which is partly argued as a relief for Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane.

7. Corkscrew Lane is a children's cycle route to Taunton Academy, to the Youth Football Club and to other sports clubs and, at the point where Manor Road joins Corkscrew Lane, takes the form of a two lane carriageway of less than 5.5m width, with a blind double bend giving zero forward visibility, no street lighting and no footways for pedestrians. If possible serious accidents are to be avoided we must insist that the existing situation be improved before the temporary access to Phase 1a is opened. Somerset County Council have prepared an Options Report (Document Reference: SCC/T1004050/002v01) dated 07/08/12 for the provision of a footway through these bends and it is understood that the adjacent land owners are willing to negotiate. The cost involved is relatively small.

8. The Parish Council appreciates the consideration that has been given to preserving the character of the existing village and supports the severing, by the Spine road, of northward travel by vehicles in the village on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane.

9. The TDBC Core Strategy (2011 – 2028) authorises between 500 and 1500 dwellings for Staplegrove. This application is for 713 dwellings and the documents refer to Staplegrove East as having 913. This is a total of 1626 dwellings. The development should not extend the stated maximum of 1500 dwellings.

The Parish Council reserves the right to add additional comments if further details are forthcoming.

*(Further comments received 6th June 2016)*

Staplegrove Parish Council has serious worries about the increased likelihood of flooding in various places due to this North Taunton Development proposal. Flooding has occurred fairly regularly in Lawn Road, at Hillhead Cottages in Rectory Road and to the sports field of Staplegrove Sports Club, due to run-off from the fields to the north during pronounced wet weather. Similarly, flooding at the junction between Whitmore Lane and Corkscrew Lane is perhaps a more frequent event, once again due to the run-off from the fields sloping down to the road from both east and west. This has been known to produce treacherous conditions on freezing nights.

It is recognized that precautions are planned to be designed to cater for the increased occurrence of flooding caused by the proposed schemes with the provision of attenuation ponds and Sustainable Drainage System techniques. We look to the Flood Risk Drainage Officer to confirm that these provisions have been satisfactorily designed to prevent the increased likelihood of flooding taking place in the future, should these two outline applications be granted.

The extension to the existing Green Wedge is located alongside Whitmore Lane and, perhaps more importantly, the adjacent Mill Lease Stream and should be as stipulated in the SADMP. This includes areas of Flooding Zone 3 ground which is unsuitable for housing. We are particularly concerned that the promoters have indicated that they wish to restrict the intended width of the Green Wedge by constructing estates on both the east and west edges. Not only does this reduce the principal purpose of the wedge of maintaining the identity and open character of the area for the health and wellbeing of the residents, but also increases the difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory method of flood prevention. This restricted width is very strongly opposed by the Parish Council.

The SADMP adopted an obvious established western boundary for the Green Wedge being the public footpath adjacent to Manor Cottage/Village World with its line of accompanying poplar trees which have Tree Preservation Orders. To the east the boundary was correctly positioned at the top of the sloping ground. The land between these two limits should not be covered with hard impervious building and paving materials.



Also of concern is the removal of hedgerows which are covered by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, particularly those alongside Rectory Road and at the rear of Lawn Road which meet the criteria including the necessary number of tree species. The loss of these important hedgerows needs to be urgently reviewed if the development is to be sympathetic to the existing Staplegrove village environment.

We understand that the purpose of the attenuation ponds is to retain surface water run-off and to delay the delivery of this water to the actual drainage system. They will normally be dry and will be designed with shallow sides to enable them to be available as open space. How will these areas be maintained and what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the necessary arrangements will last over time? Ideally this work should be undertaken by TDBC.

Whilst we would welcome the provision of an outer ring road to north Taunton to cater for and relieve the overwhelming amount of through traffic which currently uses Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane, we still consider the current applications to be excessively large and totally out of keeping with the character of the village. At present it is not necessary to build on what is largely prime 'Best and Most Versatile' agricultural land with its magnificent rural aspect which is enjoyed by many Taunton citizens.

There are few job opportunities in the immediate area and the number in Taunton generally is well down on the anticipated level assumed to be applicable during the period of the development and therefore the proposal is far too early and should await a real need being shown.

Staplegrove Parish Council therefore maintains its original position and considers that this development is unnecessary, unwanted and should not be allowed to go ahead.

*(Further comments dated 3rd January 2017)*

We are aware that the SADMP has been approved by the Council and that the area north of Staplegrove has been found to be suitable for housing and that TDBC are keen to allocate sites for housing in accordance with the current, slightly outdated, Core Strategy. However, we consider that the currently suggested number is far too great and should be within the original stated figure of 500-1500. We are also aware that the Government is pushing for more housing but, in the words of the Housing Minister and our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, 'it must be within a framework of the correct infrastructure....which means the best transport links, facilities, green spaces, cycle and walkways'. I am therefore extremely disappointed to read, in a letter sent to the promoters' highway engineers, that Mr J Burton, in a reference to the use of a possible access drop down road arrangement on to Manor Road (actually he means Corkscrew Lane), is 'happy to recommend this as a temporary measure, but I am quite certain that there will be opposition to this from Members of the Public....'

The Government, in support of the need for the correct infrastructure to be in place, have made available some £175million and I wonder why it is that you and TDBC are not requiring the promoters and subsequent developers to access some of this money to ensure that the promised spine road is completed before any house building is undertaken? This has always been the original intention and would help

in relieving the only northern outer ring road round Taunton, namely, the country lane that is Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane, from being more completely overwhelmed than it is at present. The money should then be repaid by the developers as they sell the new housing.

Why is it that TDBC are quite prepared to inflict extensive congestion, danger and pain for five years or so, on the local residents, when advantage could easily be taken of the provision made by the Government to avoid this happening? In any other business one would expect the developers to borrow the necessary finance (in this particular case from their own parent companies!) rather than causing misery on the local area for years, just so that they can make a higher profit.

*NORTON FITZWARREN PARISH COUNCIL –  
(Comments of 9th March 2016)*

The Parish Council wish to object to this application on the grounds of highway issues which will seriously affect Norton Fitzwarren. The Parish Council question the statistics given for the increase in volume of traffic as a result of this development, and would like to stress that the issues raised in our letter of the 3rd September still stand. Has the completion of the Great Western Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road been taken into account when calculating these figures?

On completion of these roads the volume of traffic will greatly increase. The parish Council agrees with paragraph 3 of Staplegrove Parish Council's letter of the 27th February, that the spine road should be completed before any development commences. Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane are the designated route for school children from Norton Fitzwarren to Ladymead Academy, it will be highly dangerous for them to use this route if it is to be used for construction traffic for the first 200 units.

The intended western exit of the spine road, as shown on the plans is not a suitable location, the Parish Council feels it would be better to exit at the junction of Silk Mills and the A358. As Staplegrove PC state in their letter five sets of traffic lights in such a short space would cause increased congestion in an already congested road.

We request that the above concerns are taken into account when considering this application.

*COTFORD ST.LUKE PARISH COUNCIL –*

The Core Strategy 2011 to 2028 states that 1500 houses have been designated for North Taunton Urban Development. This Application is for Staplegrove West, 713 houses in total. The Application documents indicate that the developers intend for 1626 houses in total, to be constructed. An increase of 126 houses in total.

The traffic flowing from the A358/B3227 through Silk Mills and towards Taunton will be severely impeded by the additional traffic from the proposed 1626 houses and employment areas within the proposed development. The traffic routes in this area of Taunton are already severely congested.

Traffic flows will be further hampered when the Northern Inner Relief Road is completed and traffic flows from Staplegrove Road towards the proposed development.

Norton Fitzwarren's incomplete relief road will also hamper traffic flows in the vicinity of the proposed development.

This proposed development will significantly impact on Taunton's infrastructure and support services. Namely the National Health Services (Musgrove Park Hospital, local doctors and dentists), education provision (lack of primary and secondary places for the number of children who will be living in the proposed development) and the town centre.

In periods of heavy rainfall, flooding regularly happens on land within and the surrounding area of the proposed development. No mitigation appears to have been put in place for the roundabout of the A358/B3227

#### *PLANNING POLICY OFFICER (TDBC) AND THE ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN -*

The two planning applications needs to be considered together to assess whether or not they conform, in total, to the policies in the Development Plan and the resolutions carried at the meeting of Borough Council's Executive of 11th November 2015.

It is noted that both applications reserve all matters except for access. Because of this, planning policy comments will therefore be restricted (1) to this unreserved aspect and (2) to any matters which the developer(s) will need to take into account or comply with when submitting subsequent planning applications for 'reserved matters', or which should feature in legal agreements.

#### Conformity with the Site Allocations and Development Plan (SADMP)

The two planning applications provide in total for 1628 dwellings. Policy TAU2 refers to 'around 1500', but this should not be seen as an upper limit. If land can be used more efficiently and a larger number of dwellings provided, in terms of the overall need to accommodate housing in Taunton, this is advantageous.

Whilst the application for the western part of the site refers to 'up to' 25% affordable housing, that for the eastern part does not. To conform with the Development Plan (Core Strategy Policy CP4) there has to be an overall provision of affordable housing across the two areas of 25%, which on the basis of the two applications submitted, would equate to around 400 units in total. The applicants did not indicate at the development plan stage that there would be any viability issues preventing the delivery of 25% affordable housing.

The application for the eastern area includes a local centre at the location specified in Policy TAU2. The application does not indicate a quantum of space for this. To comply with the Development Plan, reserved matters applications will therefore need to be brought forward to provide the amount of floorspace, mix of uses and built form (multi-storey buildings with residential or office uses on upper floors) specified in Policy TAU2.

Policy TAU2 specifies that a minimum of 2ha of serviced employment land should be provided within the overall development area. The application for the western part of the site includes 1ha of employment land. No reference is made to an area of employment of land in the planning application for the eastern part of the site, although it is referred to in the covering letter. To comply with Policy TAU2, it must be made clear that 1ha of employment land should be included on the eastern part of the site (adjacent to the local centre).

It is noted that the western application refers to 2500 sq. m of B1 office use. This is not in conformity with Policy TAU2, which refers to B1 (b) and (c), non-office uses only in the employment areas. It is also not in conformity with Policy EC1, which refers to office development as a 'main town centre use'. Freestanding office development should not be allowed to disperse away from the established town centres, particularly Taunton where major mixed-use regeneration schemes are proposed.

The proposal to include a primary school in the eastern part of the site conforms to Policy TAU2, subject to subsequent agreement with the County Council as the Education Authority.

Whilst the size and extent of the proposed Green Wedge is a 'reserved matter', the Borough Council's Executive made clear at its meeting of 11th November 2015, that 'Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.' The Green Wedge shown in the application is smaller than that shown in the SADMP, but evidence is not provided in the Design and Access Statement to justify this.

The applications provide multi-functional green space in line with Policy TAU2. *(Confirmation needed as to whether it is line with the Council's standards).*

The application for the western area proposes placing the 33kV power lines underground, as required by Policy TAU2.

The application for the western part of the site proposes that development be carried out with access from Manor Road. This appears to be in conflict with Policy TAU2, in that it would result in additional development being accessed via Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road; roads which it is intended to relieve of traffic, other than vehicles requiring access to premises. *(Need to add sentence to reflect current position with the Highway Authority).* Such a proposal also involves development in the area designated as part of the Green Wedge in the SADMP. It should be noted that there are also aspirations to expand the existing sports facilities in this area, which could be more compatible with the Green Wedge designation, and help to maintain separation between the core of Staplegrove village and the proposed new development to the east.

#### Response to Resolutions of the Borough Council's Executive 11th November 2015

At its meeting of 11th November 2015, the Borough Council's Executive resolved to endorse the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief, subject to

a number of qualifications. The relevant resolutions are set out below, with an indication of whether or not the submitted applications are held to comply, or what measures will need to be taken at the reserved matters stage to comply.

Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed spine road accords with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the spine road should be agreed by the Borough Council.

The alignment of the proposed spine road and its junction design appears to allow for a future eastern extension, should this be taken forward by the County Council as transport authority. Provision will need to continue to be safeguarded as development comes forward in planning applications for reserved matters.

The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists.

Whilst the detailed design of the spine road (i.e. between the junctions at its eastern and western extremities) is a reserved matter, it is considered that the designs which have been submitted in the planning applications do not conform to the advice contained in *Manual for Streets* (Parts 1 and 2) with regard to provision for cyclists. The comments submitted by Sustrans on the applications appear relevant in this regard.

The House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment has recommended in its report, 'Building Better Places' (February 2016) that compliance with *Manual for Streets* should be mandatory.

The applicant appears to be proposing a spine road with an overall width of 17.25m. A road designed to the Sustrans specification would have a slightly greater overall width of 19.0m (including parking bays); with a 6.75m carriageway the overall width would be 19.75m. However, the applicant's road does not provide a cycle facility on each side of the road, as advocated by Sustrans; were this to be done, the overall width would be 18.75m. It thus appears possible to provide a scheme in conformity with the advice in *Manual for Streets* and as per the comments provided by Sustrans, which does not significantly increase the land take required.

The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre. As this is a reserved matter, this will need to be demonstrated at the detailed design stage.

The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area. This is a reserved matter; however the applicant has indicated a willingness to discuss this at a later date.

The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive

design treatment would be achieved for each one. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the applicants to agree these.

The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the Council to progress this.

Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The Green Wedge shown is smaller than that shown in the SADMP, and as noted above, evidence has not been provided in the Design and Access Statement to justify this.

Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups. This is a reserved matter. Further discussions will be needed with the applicants when detailed proposals are submitted for the 2ha of employment land.

The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground. The applicants have stated their intention to do this. It is suggested that this be made a condition on any grant of planning permission.

#### SADMP Policy D2 – Approach Routes to Taunton and Wellington

Policy D2 of the SADMP refers to the need to protect the visual qualities of routes into and out of Taunton and Wellington. Taunton Road is referred to specifically in paragraph 1.8.2 linked to this policy.

The relationship of the urban area of Taunton to its rural surroundings is one of the major features that makes the town an attractive place to live, and great care therefore needs to be taken in the design of any new development.

In view of this, it is not considered acceptable to employ a roundabout at the junction between the spine road and Taunton Road. In urban design terms, recognised good practice is to first to design the overall 'place', with buildings defining spaces, and fit the highway requirements within that. This application does the opposite: it starts from the premise that a roundabout should be provided, leaving the placing of buildings and resultant quality of place as residual matters. Experience suggests that this kind of highway-led approach could have a seriously adverse impact on the visual quality of the environment.

Roundabouts of the type indicated are also unsatisfactory for cyclists and pedestrians. The proposal would therefore be in conflict with SADMP Policy A3, which among other things, aims to secure cycle-friendly road junction design.

The applicants have subsequently suggested a signalised junction be provided at

Taunton Road, instead of a roundabout. This appears more acceptable in terms of Policies D2 and A3. Consideration should however be given as to how the size of a signalised junction at Taunton Road could be minimised – for example, through the design of signal phasing to limit the need for multiple turning lanes.

In principle, the signalised junction proposed by the applicants on the A358 would be acceptable in terms of Policy D2, subject to contemporary 'best practice' being followed to minimise the use of guard railings and other vertical features. Similarly with the proposed conversion of the roundabout at the A358/Silkmills Lane to a signalised junction.

#### SADMP Policy A1 – Parking requirements

For information, it should be noted that the Borough Council has not adopted the County Council's parking standards, and that the standards set out in Appendix F of the SADMP should be applied.

#### SADMP Policy A2 – Travel Planning

The form of the development would result in significant areas of housing being beyond convenient walking distance (generally taken as being 400m) from existing bus routes along the A358 and Taunton Road. The developer should be required to provide a bus service to the development, to commence when the distance from newly constructed dwellings within the sites to existing bus stops off-site exceeds 400m.

#### SADMP Policy A3 – Cycle Network

As already noted, the future design of cycle facilities within the highway should comply with *Manual for Streets* Parts 1 and 2. The use of signalised junctions at either end of the development area appears to add weight to the argument that on the route of the spine road, cycle facilities should be in the form of good-quality on-road provision.

Many of the key cycle connections – for example, to the town centre – are off-site, and improvements will need to be funded from CIL or other sources. It is noted that the applicant does not appear to have undertaken an audit of the walking and cycle route from Staplegrove to Bindon Way.

#### SADMP Policy A5 – Accessibility of Development

As a major new development on an allocated site, the proposed developments essentially comply with Policy A5; the critical issues will be to ensure that an urban frequency bus service is provided at an early stage in the development, and that cycle connections to off-site destinations are upgraded as soon as practicable.

#### SADMP Policy D9 – A co-ordinated approach to development and highway planning

Whilst the detailed design of the development is a reserved matter, it should be noted that Policy D2 expects developers to follow the guidance contained in *Manual for Streets* Parts 1 and 2.

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP –  
(Initial comments of 20th April 2016)*

The outline application has all matters reserved except from the principle points of access. Until further information is provided to resolve existing uncertainties outlined below the Highway Authority are not able to fully consider and, or make an informed decision on the application received to date.

As the Staplegrove East Application has is yet to be submitted it is difficult for the Highway Authority to fully assess the cumulative impact of the whole 'Urban Extension' in order to identify sufficient infrastructure and mitigation measures are proposed.

It should be noted that this response does not provide detailed comments on the following submitted elements of the application:

- Travel Plan;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Proposed Spine Road;
- Access Junction West;
- Access Junction East;
- Signalised Junction Corckscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane
- Temporary Access

Comments with regard to the above listed submission documents will be provided within due-course, as and when the existing uncertainties have been resolved. At present the response only makes comment with regard the Transport Assessment, dated 26/01/2016, produced by I –Transport.

#### Overview

The Application site is to forms one half of the Staplegrove Urban Extension. At this stage the 'Area East' Application has not been received by either the Highway or Planning Authority. Information included within the 'Area West Application' indicates that the expected development splits are proposed:

#### Staplegrove West:

- 713 residential dwellings
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA over two storeys; and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping/infrastructure

#### Staplegrove East:

- 915 residential dwellings;
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA in one 2.5 storey building and one 3 storey building;
- A local centre comprising various ancillary users;
- A two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils); and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping /infrastructure

#### Transport Assessment

The Transport Assessment is considered fragmented and difficult to fully understand in the format it has been presented. For this reason, and given the number of outstanding concerns and the nature of this proposal site we suggest



that it may be appropriate to make the unusual request for a rewritten and restructured stand-alone TA. This would allow the outstanding issues to be addressed, whilst also providing the Highway Authority (along with elected Members and other stakeholders, including the public) with more confidence that the assessment is valid.

The outline application has all matters reserved except for the principle points of access. At this stage there is not considered to be enough information for the Highway Authority to be able to make an informed decision on the planning application the applicant will need to submit further details regarding the following;

- More details are required on the impact of the single access 'Phase 1 Assessment'. Modelling of the network assessed for the application this should be provided. There is concern the impact of this proposal will have on the village of Staplegrove and Manor Road, without an adequate assessment the impact is unknown. Link data identifying queue and delay should be provided as well as junction assessments. Suitable tracking and visibility splays are required.

- The temporary point of access at Village World raises concern regarding construction traffic, highway capacity, safety and visibility, whilst this is likely to be accepted in order to build a construction access from Staplegrove Road, Manor Road / Corckscrew Lane is not considered appropriate to accommodate construction traffic, once the site can be accessed from Staplegrove Road. It is noted that Pre-App discussions did not mention construction traffic and were subject to detailed information being provided.
- Access to the site should be gained from the spine road / new point of access (Staplegrove Road) as soon as possible. Manor Road is not considered appropriate to accommodate construction traffic beyond the early need.
- Information regarding the scheme modelled at the Kingston Road Gyratory is required as no detail has been provided. Further, an assessment with the Western development impact only is required, as the Highway Authority would like to understand the impact that the western development parcel in isolation will have on the gyratory.
- The Cross Keys roundabout has been modelled in 'Junctions 9' in the early scenarios and within 'LinSig' in the future year, therefore with and without development scenarios cannot be compared. It is unclear why this has been undertaken. The scheme proposal in this location is not fully understood, further information is requested. Modelling of Cross Keys does not represent observed severe queuing and delay here, especially in the AM peak; this is likely to be due to uneven lane usage.
- The 2028 'With development' Traffic flows assessment includes the provision of the spine road, it is noted that a number of assumptions have been applied regarding the re-distribution of traffic from Manor Road East and Westbound. However no sensitivity testing has been undertaken to identify the impact on junctions where traffic may divert along the network.
- There are a number of turning and distribution diagrams that need revising /clarifying – the Highway Authority will contact I -Transport to discuss
- The wider network as previously requested by SCC does not appear to be assessed, junctions include: A358 Staplegrove Road, Greenway Road, A3207 Staplegrove Road mini roundabout and The A358 Staplegrove Road / Bindon Road Priority Junction. Whilst no reference has been made within

the TA it is assumed the future year modelling scenarios take into account the NIDR in operation as this would have been included in the SATURN Model which has been utilised.

This information is essential to understand the impact the proposed development could generate, in order for the Highway Authority to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the network is managed and maintained. If this information is not forthcoming then the Highway Authority may need to raise objection to this proposal on the grounds of a lack of information.

Notwithstanding the above the Highway Authority will continue to consider the technical detail of schemes which have been included and assess their acceptability. Depending on what additional information is received (and when) and the outcome following further consideration of the submitted schemes, the Highway Authority reserve the right to request further information when all elements of the application have been reviewed. However, the additional information is necessary to inform consideration of the application.

*(Further comments of 28th July 2016)*

There are a number of elements set out within this response which required addressing prior to the Highway Authority making a recommendation. Without referencing the Transport assessment which is currently being addressed by the applicants transport consultants, there are a number of additional matters that need to be clarified and, or addressed. Without further information the Highway Authority would be minded to recommend a refusal based on insufficient information being provided in order to make an informed decision.

The outline application has all matters reserved except for the principle points of access. The following elements of the application have been reviewed in detail by the Highway Authority and comments are included within this response;

- Travel Plan;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Proposed Spine Road;
- Access Junction West;
- Access Junction East;
- Signalised Junction Corckscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane; and
- Temporary Access

Overview

The Application site forms one half of the Staplegrove Urban Extension. Two applications are submitted by two applicants PM Asset Management on behalf of area 'East' and Ptarmigan group on behalf of area 'West'. The proposed developments consist of:

*Staplegrove West:*

- 713 residential dwellings
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA over two stores); and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping/infrastructure

### *Staplegrove East:*

- 915 residential dwellings;
- 1ha of B1(c) / B2 / B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA in one 2.5 storey building and one 3 storey building);
- A local centre comprising various ancillary users;
- A two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils); and
- Construction of a Spine Road and associated landscaping /infrastructure

### Phasing

Both Staplegrove East and West are proposed to come forward in phases:

#### Phase 1

The first phase of development is divided into two parts. Phase 1a will seek to provide circa 200 units. Phase 1b provides an additional circa 50 units and associated infrastructure. The entirety of the Spine Road will also need to be completed by the 250th dwelling. A temporary drainage channel will be installed linking to existing field ditches to attenuate the Spine Road. At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane southbound will be stopped up, as well as the temporary access road, preventing unwanted vehicular short cuts. Phase 1b will be served from the new Silk Mills signalled junction.

#### Phase 2

Development during phase 2 will include completion of the employment area on the western side of the site and circa 302 units. The phase 2 development is split into land at Staplegrove Farm which equates to circa 87 units and the remaining land west of Rectory Road which will provide circa 215 units.

#### Phase 3

Phase 3 will see the completion of the development, circa 161 units. It is considered that phasing of the East and West Developments will overlap. With regard to the delivery of infrastructure, particularly referencing the Spine Road detailed information will need to be provided at the reserved matters stage to ensure the timely delivery of major infrastructure. Appropriate triggers will need to be detailed within the appropriate legal agreement in line with the outline application.

### Transport Assessment

The Transport Assessments for both East and West have been commented on separately prior to this response being produced of which have been sent to the Planning Authority and subsequently the applicants Transport Consultants. Further work is being undertaken which will form Addendum to the original Transport Assessment, in order to fully understand the impact of the development impact with regard to Highway safety, capacity and the benefits and impacts with regard to the existing area of Staplegrove Village and the wider network. Off-site Highway Works that have been detailed or requested with regard to the TA are to be covered in further detail when the Addendum TA is submitted for review.

### Travel Plan

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need clarifying / addressing. It should be noted at this

stage that TP will be subject to a Section 106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required. Due to the size of the development it is considered appropriate for a Framework TP to be produced to ensure the details of the whole development both 'East' and 'West' are included within the overarching plan. It may also be beneficial to have SCC act as the Travel Plan co-ordinator.

Further detail is required with regard to the following points, additional points are raised within the full audit and comments will be issued separately to the applicants Transport Consultants to address points raised within the Audit.

- Bus Services;
- Site Audit; details relating to: 'Accessibility by Non-car modes'; School delivery and connectivity, Footways, and Offsite connectivity;
- Measures;
- Travel Plan Co-ordinator and the proposed management levy;
- Vehicle and Cycle Parking, and
- Monitoring

The successes of the delivery of the TP's are likely to hang on one succinct TP and Co-ordinator taking lead.

#### Flood Risk Assessment

The Flood Risk Assessment, ref. 30734/4002 rev D dated January 2016, prepared by Messrs. Peter Brett Associates and submitted in support of this planning application has been reviewed. Comments are made as follows on the contents and conclusions of this report as they pertain to the existing and prospective public highway network.

- I note that the drainage strategy incorporates the use of attenuation ponds. Whilst it is noted that the current layout is indicative, careful consideration regarding their location / proximity to the highway will need to be given. Additionally, whilst SCC would not wish to adopt the attenuation basins SCC has a vested interest in their performance and as such a strict maintenance program will need to be adhered to in order to safeguard the efficiency of the system. Confirmation regarding the future maintenance responsibilities will be required.
- It should be noted that pervious pavement is not currently approved for use in adoptable highways in Somerset and therefore will need to be constrained for use on this development within private areas only. The Designer will be required to consider in detail the correlation between any permeable paved area and the prospective public highway to ensure that any future works in the highway will not inadvertently compromise the integrity of the permeable paved area. These paved areas should also be designed with levels that fall away from the highway to reduce the impact upon the highway of any failure in their operation.
- The Highway Authority will need to consider in detail any proposals for filter strips, ditches and swales on or serving the highway to ensure that they are appropriate, safe and maintainable. Commuted sums may be charged to reflect the additional maintenance liability.

- It must be assumed that any existing highway drainage systems that may be present within the locality are operating at design capacity and are therefore not suitable to serve to collect any increase in highway catchment.

#### Access Junction East

The Staplegrove West application includes the provision of a roundabout to be located on Taunton Road to the East of the proposed development site. The roundabout is to be provided by the Staplegrove East applicant whose transport consultant have produced the proposed roundabout scheme. Detail with regard to the access junction is outlined in the East Response 34/16/0014 With regard to the design and layout the following drawing has been reviewed ' *Taunton Road Access Roundabout*' 0781-GA-022.

#### Access Junction West

The access junction for the West site will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrove Road to the East of Silk Mills and connecting to the proposed Spine Road. A second signal controlled junction is proposed in place of the existing Silk Mills Roundabout. This will result in right/left stagger arrangement which would be acceptable to the Highway Authority.

It is noted that the minor access road to Staplegrove Mills and Lodge will be uncontrolled and will join the A358 in the centre of two junctions. Traffic turning right out of the existing access road may become blocked and queue in peak periods. Consideration should be given to diverting the access road to provide a fourth arm at the signal controlled junction opposite Silk Mills or on to the proposed Spine Road forming a simple T-Junction.

*Cycle infrastructure:* It is not clear how the proposed cycle infrastructure adjacent to the Spine Road will connect to the signalised junction. The scheme should be extended to the signalised junction. The segregated cycle route should be extended around into Staplegrove Road. Advanced stop lines should also be provided to cater for those cyclists that wish to remain on carriageway. Consideration should be given to the provision of Advisory or mandatory cycle lanes. The existing substandard shared route on the northern side of the A358 Staplegrove Road should be increased to 3.5m. This should then also run round into the new access and link up with the proposed cycle route that runs alongside the spine road.

*Storage Length:* The storage length of the right turn lane for traffic turning right from the A358 Staplegrove Road into the new spine road should be designed to meet the capacity requirements of the junction, to avoid turning traffic blocking the adjacent lane it should be of sufficient length to accommodate the longest queue of stopped traffic. Similarly traffic may be prevented from turning right where there is a high proportion of straight ahead traffic queuing in the adjacent lane. The storage length of the right turn lane measures 30m equivalent to 5 PCUs. Conformation should be provided.

*Traffic Signals:* No provision has been made for a vehicle maintenance bay. This should be located adjacent to the controller, and be easily accessible from the carriageway. The maintenance bay should consist of a hard-standing area capable

of containing at least a long-wheeled base maintenance van. Consideration also needs to be given to visibility splays when incorporating this feature into the design.

It is noted that the proposed junction falls within an existing speed limit, covered by a 40mph Traffic Regulation Order. Given the potential introduction of many turning movements to and from the A358 consideration may need to be given to amending the speed limits by variation to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's).

There are three lanes (two ahead / one right turn) on the approach to the spine road for traffic travelling westbound on the A358. This is controlled primarily by a single nearside primary head. It is considered that an additional refuge should be placed between the westbound and eastbound traffic, housing appropriate signal street furniture, along with all relevant illuminated bollards, etc.

Due to the volumes of (two lane) eastbound traffic opposing the right turn onto the development spine road, the right turn movement needs to be fully signalled (not just a RTIGA). This is in the interest of safety, if not capacity.

The base LinSig models do not reflect the proposed junction layouts in the supplied drawings. Also as noted elsewhere, the proposed layouts are sub-standard. Drawings should be adapted to produce layouts more 'in-keeping' with true operational arrangements – e.g. genuine refuge sizes, staggers, etc.

It is noted that within the models, some 'default' values have been left and not amended to reflect the true situation. For example, 0% gradients have been used. It is noted that a default value of 5.75m is used for 1 PCU. It is suggested that a value of 6.0m per PCU is used, which in discussion with JCT Consultancy, is more in keeping with values, particularly in Somerset. The model excessively overestimates capacity by incorporating two 100m long 3.25m wide exit lanes (with no gradient). The exit lane on the drawing is shown as approximately 5m wide for a distance of approximately 20m from the edge of the Junction Inter-visibility Zone.

It is noted that cycle times are long (typically 180 seconds), and this is not considered appropriate where pedestrians (and cyclists) need to cross the carriageway. Cycle times should be reduced to a level more appropriate for pedestrian (and cycle) traffic. This would typically be no longer than 120 seconds.

The proposed split of lane usage utilised is likely to be optimistic. Their proposal may be available if the two lanes are extended from the new junction to meet the approaches at the Staplegrove Road / Showell Park, Junction.

Modelling of the existing Staplegrove Road / Manor Road does not assess the actual operation of the existing traffic signals as it has been modelled running on two main stages rather than the actual four. This should be addressed.

Traffic flows indicate that no vehicles at all will be turning right into Langford Mead from Silk Mills (phase K in model). However we are aware that traffic does indeed turn right here and are therefore concerned over the accuracy of the traffic flows entered into this model.

### Temporary Access

The proposal put forward is for a simple priority junction arrangement on Corkscrew Lane. Phase 1A of the development will consist of up to 200 dwellings. This could produce in the region of between 1200 and 1600 vehicle movements per day in and out of the development.

AADT figures for Corkscrew Lane in 2013 were 5543 vehicles and 85th percentile vehicle speeds were recorded as 29.5mph. Based on the above information a ghost island right turn arrangement would be suitable in accordance with TD 42/95 Geometric Design of Major/Minor Priority Junctions.

The proposal of a temporary access junction at this stage raises highway safety and capacity concerns. Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road are considered rural in nature. One of the purposes of the construction of the Spine Road is to relieve traffic from Manor Road; however the proposed treatment of Manor Road has not been detailed at this stage. Policy TAU2 of the Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, states: *'Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local accesses. With regard to local traffic it is not considered that the policy was referring to new development traffic being deemed as local traffic, justification text states: 'A key issue is the current route through the Village of Staplegrove, which is entirely unsuitable to accommodate additional traffic. For this reason, a new distributor road is proposed running from the existing roundabout on the A358 to Kingston Road. This would enable traffic to be removed from the centre of Staplegrove, other than vehicles requiring access'*. If the access were proven essential for the delivery of the development to be gained from Manor Road or Corkscrew Lane the Highway Authority would require that this was provided after the opening of the Spine Road and at a point when through traffic at Manor Road was managed to ensure the delivery of what the proposal set out to achieve.

Whilst it is accepted that this is proposed as a temporary access, it could remain in use for a considerable period of time and may even be used as access for other construction activities on the site. Both construction activities and residential access may create a large volume of turning movements throughout the day resulting in queuing traffic on Corkscrew Lane. This may increase the potential for shunt type accidents on Corkscrew Lane particularly as the junction is preceded by a sharp double bend with little forward visibility. Further information is required as to why this proposal has been put forward including what other options were considered. This information should be provided to the Audit Team with the next submission.

Whilst it is understood that the Spine Road is privately funded, there is concern of the initial point of access from Manor Road. Albeit Temporary in the I-transport proposal but permanent within the WSP proposal. The location of the initial phase of development in line with impacts on Manor Road a narrow sensitive route raises capacity and safety concerns. The reasoning for commencing development in this location is still not fully understood. It is noted that Technical Note and Letter have been received by the Ptarmigan dated 24th June. The justification provided to date is not considered to fully identify why access should be delivered in this location,

opposed to other locations, an issues and options report has not been produced, and at present concerns regard to capacity and safety remain.

### *Priority Narrowing*

It is noted from the drawing provided that there is to be a priority narrowing on the second estate road although it is unclear why such a feature is to be provided particularly as priority is being given to traffic entering the estate and not leaving the estate. The minimum width of 3.7m is likely to be acceptable if this feature is retained.

### Spine Road

The Spine Road is proposed to be delivered by the 250th dwelling with regard to Staplegrove West and 326 dwellings 0.5 ha of employment and a primary school at Staplegrove East. At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane southbound will be stopped up, as well as the proposed temporary access at Manor Lane, it should be noted that the closure of the temporary access only applies to the Western development.

Given that one of the functions of the Spine Road is to promote the transfer through-traffic away from Staplegrove Village, drivers should not be expected to wait on a bend for the way ahead to become clear. Swept Paths should be provided showing two 16.5m articulated vehicles passing on each of the curves throughout the scheme and widths amended accordingly. These drawings should be provided at the scale of 1:200. A pedestrian refuge island on the eastern alignment is proposed approximately 100m from Whitmore Lane. It is not clear why this is proposed.

It appears from drawings provided that Rectory Road and Whitmore is to be served by the new Spine Road, therefore there will be no connection to the south from the Spine Road. This doesn't appear to be mentioned within the Transport Assessment. Additional information regarding the proximity of the turning heads to the back of the footway adjacent to the Spine Road any proposed cycle and pedestrian links between Whitmore Lane and the Spine Road should be provided.

The Design and Access Statement makes reference to traffic calming, which appears to relate to the Spine Road. Whilst the Highway Authority understand the intention is to provide a 'balanced' street combining the effective movement with the creation of a sense of place, which will have a degree of on street parking, limited direct access, positioning of junctions, pedestrian permeability creating 'events to check vehicle speeds' rather than physical traffic calming measures, particularly given the function of the road, clarification should be provided.

Details where toucan crossings and other crossing along the Spine Road will be located have not been provided. Crossing points should be provided in line with the movement strategy. It should be noted at this stage that the provision of signalised crossings will be subject to individual commuted sums and will be subject to the Section 106. When sufficient information has been received it is likely that the principal of the Spine Road, and detail will need to set out within an appropriate Section 106 agreement.



The spine road should be delivered in order to accommodate development traffic, diverted traffic from Staplegrove village, it is considered that an element of new traffic will use the route as it will be easier to negotiate than the existing village route, sufficient modelling should be provided to confirm this is achievable.

#### Kingston Road / Corkscrew Lane Junction

It is proposed as part of the application that traffic signals will be installed at the Junction of Kingston Road and Corkscrew Lane. There are currently pedestrian crossing facilities on the southern Kingston Road arm that link in with the existing cycle way along Corkscrew Lane. It is not clear if the link between these be upgraded as part of the scheme works?

No provision has been made for a vehicle maintenance bay. This should be located adjacent to the controller, and be easily accessible from the carriageway. The maintenance bay should consist of a hard-standing area capable of containing at least a long-wheeled base maintenance van. Consideration also needs to be given to visibility splays when incorporating this feature into the design.

The current proposal indicates the existing 'Toucan' crossing point remains at a similar location. However, this has the effect of extending the junction limits further out than may be necessary. Consideration should be given to reviewing the route of the East/West cycle movement and whether the proposed junction can be made more 'compact'. It would make sense to link proposed pedestrian and cycle links from the development to the existing cycle and pedestrian infra-structure already in place.

#### Drainage

It appears that alterations to an existing ordinary watercourse are proposed as part of the construction of the shared footway/cycleway on the northern side of Corkscrew Lane east of the new temporary access. Consent will be required from Somerset County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority) to alter this watercourse. Consent forms can be obtained from the Somerset County Council website as per the following link:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding/work-on-an-ordinarywatercourse/>

Additional drainage provision will be required along Corkscrew Lane in front of the new kerb line to intercept the surface water runoff that previously infiltrated into the adjacent verge/ditch. The Designer will need prove that the proposals (resulting in increased surface water runoff) result in nil detriment to the system downstream of the works. No surface water runoff from the private temporary access will be permitted to discharge on to the public highway. With this in mind consideration should be given for designing the levels to fall from the adjacent highway.

The detailed design proposals will need to consider the drainage implications of the construction of the shared footway/cycleway on the existing land drainage arrangements, particularly in the north east extent of the footway/cycleway works.

## Conclusion

There are a number of elements detailed above that require clarification at this stage. This information is essential to understand the impact the proposed development could generate, in order for the Highway Authority to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the network is managed and maintained. If this information is not forthcoming then the Highway Authority may need to raise objection to this proposal on the grounds of a lack of information. It should be noted that due to the size and nature of the proposed development the Highway Authority reserve the right to request further information when all elements of the application have been reviewed.

## (Further comments dated 3rd November 2016)

Please read this response alongside those previously provided as this does not supersede those comments, but rather adds to them.

## Summary

As this is an outline application with all matters reserved except access. There are a number of points with regard to detail that will require addressing at the reserved matters stage subject to planning consent being granted.

## Conclusion

Having reviewed the technical work provided within the Transport Assessment Addendum alongside the full submission it is the view of the Highway Authority that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to the following highway mitigation being secured through s106. If any of these measures are not able to be secured, the impact on the Highway Network is likely to be severe in terms of NPPF and should be recommended for refusal.

## Development Specific:

- Site Access Staplegrove West Signalised Junction;
- Site Access Staplegrove East (junction type tbc),
- Development Spine Road Linking Staplegrove Road with Taunton Road (KingstonSt Mary);
- Possible temporary access (restricted movement) arrangement at Manor Road, and longer term pedestrian and cycling access only (subject to comments herein);
  - A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular short cuts

## Offsite mitigation necessary to accommodate proposed development

- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement)
- Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction Signalisation;
- Kingston Road Gyratory (the complex junction of Kingston Road, Cheddon Road, Greenway Road, Station Road, Priorswood Road and Station Approach)

- Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signals (no physical mitigation is proposed but spine road delivery and linking of the site access to this junction by SCOOT or similar is essential)

### Travel Plan

Travel plan measures to include but no limited to:

- Bus services / stops and if required improvements;
- Parking, for bikes, motorcycles and vehicles; and
- Travel plan packs and incentives.

### Other

Other locations that will be affected by the development proposals, but that we can not reasonably require mitigation under s106 are -

- Bindon Rod / Staplegrove Road priority Junction,
- Staplegrove Road / Greenway Road Mini roundabout.

### Access Junction West

This application (West) includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a Junction west of the development to Staplegrove Road is essential for this proposal. The West access junction will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrove Road between Manor Road. A second signal controlled junction is proposed in place of the existing Silk Mills Roundabout. This will result in a right/left stagger arrangement which would be acceptable to the Highway Authority. As the access junction proposal links the Silk Mills Junction (with SCOOT or similar) is considered necessary to combine an improvement at Cross Keys to ensure that the network remains running, without such an improvement in this location it is likely that the current delay and capacity constraint will be increased due to platooning of traffic from the proposed signalised junctions.

### Access Junction East

This application includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a junction east of the development to Taunton Road is essential for this proposal. There are currently discussions underway regarding the form of junction that will be required, and these are yet to be settled by Taunton Deane. Whichever junction is to be delivered, it will be secured by s106 agreement, that the design is deliverable and will ensure that the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is paramount, and that capacity is adequately catered for.

### Spine Road

The Spine Road is considered essential for both East and West developments and will be included within both s106 agreements to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety; by either applicant this will be set by appropriate triggers. Currently the

Spine Road is proposed to be delivered by the 250th dwelling with regard to Staplegrove West and 326 dwellings, 0.5 ha of employment and a primary school at Staplegrove East, or within five years of the commencement of development (whichever comes first). At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) will be closed to vehicular traffic, as will the temporary access at Manor Road.

Comments have previously been made with regard to the Spine Road, although further detailed design work will be addressed at the reserved matters stage. Consistency of the scheme, (as part is designed by the East applicant and part is designed by the West applicant) is considered essential to ensure a safe and sufficient piece of infrastructure is provided for all users (vehicles, and non-motorised alike).

#### Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signalised Junction

The Manor Road / Staplegrove Road junction requires the delivery of the Spine Road (resulting in subsequent reduction in traffic at this junction) in order to operate within capacity in the future year with development. The Provision of SCOOT, or similar is also considered essential to manage the operation and movement along the network, linking with the other proposed Junctions, (West access and Silk Mills).

#### Temporary Access

The developer has proposed a temporary access point from Manor Road (in the location of the existing Village world access). They now propose that this will serve up to 200 dwellings from the West Application site only or for a maximum of 5 years (whichever comes first). The form if this junction has changed within the revised submission and now proposes a restricted movement junction of 'right in - left out' to try and remove development traffic from routing through the narrow and traffic calmed sections of Manor Road. It is noted however that this traffic will have an impact on Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane to the east and the Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane / Corkscrew Lane Junction.

As you are aware from previous comments, additional traffic on Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane is a concern to the Highway Authority. Whilst it is noted that this is a temporary access, any additional access on Corkscrew Lane is considered contrary to Policy TAU2. The addendum is not clear how traffic on Manor Road will be managed, post spine road opening. In order to satisfy the Policy requirement a management proposal is considered necessary.

With regard to proposed residential traffic there is no certainty that the 'right in – left out' arrangement would be adhered to or could be enforced and therefore, in the interim it might be realistic to assume there is likely to be an increase in traffic that will travel through Staplegrove Village.

Whilst I have previously commented on the link assessment of Manor Road this remains a concern. The assessment shows that both Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane would be close to capacity assuming a road width of 5.5m and no HGVs. The calculation assumed two-way movement and do not allow for pinch points such as the traffic calming features. The margin of uncertainty of this assessment is large, in practice it is not possible to be certain that the link will remain under capacity. It should therefore be acknowledge that peak hour congestion cannot be ruled out.

If the temporary access junction is accepted by Taunton Deane it will be imperative that a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is secured, that routes construction traffic via Corkscrew Lane (not Manor Road) and Kingston Road, and that it minimises traffic during peak times – ideally with enforcement.

In summary there is no certainty that the temporary access junction could be delivered without impacting on the village of Staplegrove in the interim, or how Manor Road will be managed for 'local access when the Spine Road is open. Whilst it is technically possible to create a temporary access, it must be a matter for the Local Planning Authority to determine if the benefits outweigh the negatives.

#### Corkscrew Lane / Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane Staggered Junction

It is noted within the TA and Addendum that the existing Junction requires a mitigation scheme in order to improve safety and visibility with the addition of the development. A further feasibility audit has been undertaken, and the designer's responses considered, there are a number of elements that will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage with regard to the signalised proposal at this location, subject to consent in order to ensure the proposal is appropriate and deliverable in terms of both safety and capacity.

You should be aware that there is likely to be an impact on the green space and trees at this location, in order to provide a safe and appropriate junction.

#### Kingston Road Gyratory

The Kingston Road Gyratory is modelled to operate above its practical reserve capacity in the AM peak period in all forecast scenarios and is above capacity in the PM by 2028. It is clear that the proposed developments, Staplegrove East and West impact on this junction. The modelled scheme which provides a small benefit, is an improvement on the 'Do Nothing Scenario' but does not completely mitigate the impact.

A full scheme in this location will be required to be fully funded and delivered by the developers of the East and West and proposals and will need to be secured within Section 106 agreements for both applicants.

#### Pedestrian and Cycle access / improvements:

A safe route from the proposed development sites to the Taunton Academy is considered essential for the proposed development, detailed of this route will need to be provided as part of a reserved matters application and will be included within the s106. Improvements to the walking and cycling facilities at Gypsy Lane are also considered necessary in order to improve and encourage sustainable travel in line with Travel Plan proposals from the site.

#### Travel Plan

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with the application. There are a number of elements that need addressing. It should be noted that the TP will be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided. Where Plans cross over 'East and West' an element of consistency is required. It is considered beneficial to have one Travel Plan co-ordinator for both sites. SCC has offered to act as TPC for both Staplegrove developments. In principal subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove West Travel Plan is considered to be close to approval subject to final amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106.

If the application is approved the following conditions are recommended:

- In relation to the Spine Road any access shall ensure that there shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 300 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 43 metres either side of the access. Such visibility shall be fully provided before any junction(s) with the Spine Road is brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.
- The proposed estate roads, footways, footpaths, tactile paving, cycleways, bus stops/bus laybys, verges, junctions, street lighting, sewers, drains, retaining walls, service routes, surface water outfall, vehicle overhang margins, embankments, visibility splays, accesses, carriageway gradients, drive gradients, car, motorcycle and cycle parking, and street furniture shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with details to be approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing before their construction begins. For this purpose, plans and sections, indicating as appropriate, the design, layout, levels, gradients, materials and method of construction shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.
- The proposed roads, including footpaths and turning spaces where applicable, shall be constructed in such a manner as to ensure that each dwelling before it is occupied shall be served by a properly consolidated and surfaced footpath and carriageway to at least base course level between the dwelling and existing highway.
- No development shall commence unless a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plan. The plan shall include:
  - Construction vehicle movements;
  - Construction operation hours;
  - Construction vehicular routes to and from site;
  - Construction delivery hours;
  - Expected number of construction vehicles per day;
  - Car parking for contractors;
  - Specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice;
  - A scheme to encourage the use of Public Transport amongst contractors; and
  - Measures to avoid traffic congestion impacting upon the Strategic Road Network.
- The applicant shall ensure that all vehicles leaving the site are in such condition as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. In particular (but without prejudice to the foregoing), efficient means shall be installed, maintained and employed for cleaning the wheels of all lorries leaving the site, details of which shall have been agreed in advance in writing by the Local Planning Authority and fully implemented prior to commencement of development and thereafter maintained until the use of the site discontinues.

- The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the access to the residential road that provides access to the development has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.
- In the interests of sustainable development none of the dwellings hereby permitted shall be occupied until footpath connections have been constructed within the development site in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- No work shall commence on the development site until an appropriate right of discharge for surface water has been obtained before being submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. A drainage scheme for the site showing details of gullies, connections, soakaways and means of attenuation on site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
- Before any work is commenced a programme showing the phasing of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development of the estate shall not proceed other than in accordance with the approved programme.

*(Further comments [on the revised E.S.] dated 26th January 2017)*

For the reasons set out below the recommendation is unchanged from the previous response dated 03/11/2016.

General East and West

I have reviewed both the east and west amended plans and Transport Assessment's received in my department on the 21st December 2016. With regard to the Highway Authorities formal response dated 03/11/2016 previous comments apply. Several matters that were required to be included within the 106 have not been

updated within the TA, specifically:

- A management scheme for Manor Road
- A walking and cycling link from the development site(s) to the Taunton Academy
- Off-site Cycle improvements at Gypsy Lane
- S106 Funded Kingston Road Gyrotory (not a contribution)
- Cross Keys Signalisation to link with network proposals

With regard to the amended plans it is noted that footway along site frontages and a vehicular access to the proposed school would also be required to form part of the 106 agreement.

It should also be noted that the contribution towards a scheme at Manor Road is not considered sufficient and that the Management 'not just a study into the management of the route' should be secured.

*Cross Keys Roundabout*

The Highway Authority do not feel confident that the proposed scheme (which does not incorporate signalisation) provides a sufficient improvement, however it is difficult to fully interpret results as the model has not been calibrated. Previous comments have been issued to the applicants transport consultants.

Technical Audit comments -Staplegrove East Signalised access junction (included in both East and West amended plans)

The following points have arisen from Audit and should be addressed:

Kingston Road is particularly narrow immediately north of the junction with Corkscrew Lane measuring less than 5.5m and there are no footways. There are concerns that the increase in traffic going to and from the new development will create problems on the existing network and may increase the potential for head to head collisions and side impact collisions within the vicinity of the property known as Oakhills.

It is recommended that the section of carriageway between Corkscrew Lane and the proposed new junction is widened to 6.5m with a 3.5m wide footway/cycleway on one side (the eastern side?). The footway/cycle way would provide a link to the parcel of land to the east. A Toucan Crossing could be provided on the southern arm to cross users over and in to the main development to the west.

The minimum width between kerbs on the eastern arm entry lane should be 3.5m to minimise the potential for kerb strikes and damage to infrastructure. Please confirm that is the case.

**Signals comments to be addressed Drawing No. 0781-GA-045 Revision D**

It is noted that the signal heads on the approach from the north are shown as full green aspects. As the design indicates separate movements, the appropriate arrows will need to be shown.

It is noted that phase F is shown running in stage 3, which is in conflict with traffic phase E. As phase F is already catered for in stage 2 this adequately addresses any pedestrian/cyclist demand. Amend detail as necessary, relating to stage 3.

There are some concerns that driver(s) who legitimately traverse the stop line when travelling north and making a right turn, may become 'trapped' in the centre of the junction by opposing flows when stage 1 terminates and stage 2 commences, when there are no gaps in the flows. Consideration should be given to overcome the potential scenario.

On the western approach arm a carriageway narrowing/footway and cycleway widening appears to be still shown in place. It is questioned whether this is an outstanding feature left over from the previously planned remote pedestrian crossing proposal? Clarify detail as appropriate.

**Comment**

On the eastern approach arm, southern side, the tactile paving layout is incorrect. The stem of the 'L' should guide a visually impaired person to the push button demand unit. Amend detail, as necessary.



## **TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS**

Traffic Regulation Orders will be required for the flowing proposals, although the TRO process is separate to the planning process, whilst these scheme are set out below any scheme within the application (s) that involves closure, speed limit change, movement restriction, stopping restriction ... etc. will also need approval of a TRO :

- It is noted from the drawings provided that Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane southbound will be stopped up, as well as the temporary access road, preventing unwanted vehicular shortcuts.
- Clarification will be required regarding the implementation of any new speed limits. (30mph and 40mph limits).

All of these can be dealt with as part of the S106 and Tech approval process.

### Staplegrove West Travel Plan

All the above applies with regard to Staplegrove west with the addition of the following:

- Minor amendments are required to the TP:
  - A detailed Framework TP has been submitted. However, there are just a couple of areas that need further details:
    - Further information is required regarding bus services and commitment i.e. aspiration of a free bus for year as mentioned in meeting with Highways.
    - Safe routes to schools should be provided for the relevant primary and secondary schools.
    - Improve off-site measures i.e. upgrade Gypsy Lane.
    - Further details are required regarding the proposed management levy.
    - Minor amendments that were not changed as requested from previous audit.

### Other Highway Mitigation

- Staplegrove Road / Greenway Road Mini roundabout appears to be proposed as a mitigation measure, therefore this will need to be secured in the S106. As John mention this was considered to be a CIL Item
- A technology package (MOVA/SCOOT) for junctions will also be secured by 106
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement)

### Staplegrove East

As well as the general information detailed above,

- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and

- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site providing greater connectivity towards Taunton.
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement)
- Several amendments and commitments need updating need to be committed to in the TP an amended plan has not been received
- A technology package (MOVA/SCOOT) for junctions will also be secured by 106

In order to secure the proposed requirements within a S106, associated details and plans will need to be provided. As per the November response further technical information is likely to be required with regard to the Hope Corner Lane junction. Please note these items are not exclusive and the previous comments still stand.

#### *HIGHWAYS ENGLAND –*

*(Original comments dated 15th June 2016)*

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the current of the Secretary of State as set out in OfT Circular 02/2013 *The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development* and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### Statement of reasons

The Transport Assessment (TA) prepared by i-transport accompanies an outline planning application submission for the Staplegrove West proposals. The proposals include 713 dwellings and 6,666sqm GFA of 81(c) / 82/ 88 employment land uses.

In parallel, WSP is intending to submit an outline planning application for the Staplegrove East site, which together form the overall masterplan referred to as Staplegrove, Taunton. The overall site is being brought forward to planning in this manner, as the site is within the ownership of two separate land owners. As such, two TAs have been prepared for the East and West sites, but with traffic impact of the combined proposals also presented in the TA analysis.

The Staplegrove East site (WSP) does not currently form part of this planning application submission, but will follow in due course. This future planning application submission will include 915 dwellings, 9,166sqm GFA of B1(c)/82/88 employment land uses, a 14 class two-form entry primary school (circa 420 pupils) and a local Centre comprising various ancillary uses.

Highways England has undertaken a review of the i-transport TA dated 26 January 2016 for the Staplegrove West site, but given that both sites are interconnected and will shortly form parallel live planning applications, our

·  
comments largely focus on the potential traffic impact of the combined proposals on M5 Junction 25.

### Site Allocation

The Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy (2011-2028) identifies the Staplegrove site as a 'broad location for growth' over the plan period and suitable for a mixed-use urban extension of between 500 and 1500 dwellings (Policy SS6).

The Staplegrove site is identified for allocation within the emerging Taunton Deane Borough Council - Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (DSADM). This report builds on the framework set out in the Core Strategy, and sets out the policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane up to 2028. Within the SADMP, the site is identified for 1500 dwellings, with affordable housing provided at 25%, and a minimum of 2 hectares (5000sqm) of serviced employment land comprising Class B1 and c, Class B2 and Class B8 land uses.

Combining both the East and West sites, the development proposals are understood to provide 1628 dwellings in total, which is 128 dwellings in excess of the maximum 1500 dwelling site allocation. However for the purpose of this planning application submission, the Staplegrove West proposals includes the provision of 713 dwellings, which is in accordance within the 500 - 1500 dwelling allocation.

### Trip Generation

The i-transport TA suggests that trip rates/generation have been discussed and agreed with the local highway authority at a pre-application stage, with analysis set out in a technical note referenced - ITL10047-009D provided in Appendix J of the TA. Highways England has not been subject to these discussions and therefore our comments are set out below.

#### *Residential*

The TA presents two-way trips rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM) for private residential dwellings. These are believed to be lower than values typically acceptable to Highways England. Our audit comments include:

- The very minimum of 5 TRICS sites have been used to derive a trip rate;
- Only 'edge of town' surveys are included for residential sites, yet the geographical area extends to include 'suburban area' for employment land uses. This would have provided a larger sample of surveys in which to have derived a trip rate;
- 2 of the 5 TRICS surveys were undertaken on a Friday, which can result in lower trip rates being calculated when compared to other weekdays;
- Trip rates are calculated for private houses, although the TRICS surveys include a mixture of private flats and houses, which could suggest a lower trip rate value is attained.

- The Taunton Deane Middle Output Area (MOA) from census identifies a car ownership level of 1.5, which suggests a high level of car ownership in the general area compared to national or regional levels;
- Car parking provision is to be identified at a Reserved Matters planning application stage. If dwellings include up to 4 bedrooms, then 3 parking spaces per dwelling could be provided, with additional spaces provided for visitors. Should this materialise, the potential for peak hour trip generation would significantly increase.

Based on the above comments, it is believed that the residential trip rates presented in the TA currently underestimate the potential for residential trip generation at the site and Highways England requests that further justification for these trip rates be provided. Alternatively, Highways England requests that additional residential trip rates be presented using more realistic/robust values. These can be provided as a 'Highways England sensitivity test' if required, but will form the basis of which Highways England consider the traffic impact of the proposals on the SAN.

#### *Employment*

An industrial estate trip rate has been used to represent the industrial employment proposals comprising 81(c), 82 and 88 land uses. i-transport have manually removed 13 82 and 88 surveys from the TAICS selection to provide a robust view of industrial trip generation. These results are accepted.

#### *Education*

Primary education trip rates have been calculated using expected primary school pupil numbers, using a range of 200 to 600 pupils. Highways England does not envisage that education trips will travel as far as the SAN, although the trip rate values presented in the TA are accepted.

#### *Local Centre*

The local centre land uses are considered to be ancillary, with the majority of trips contained within the site or the local area. Highways England accepts this approach.

### Traffic Distribution/Assignment

#### *Residential*

Using National Travel Survey (NTS) data, i-transport have grouped residential trips by journey purpose to determine likely distribution locations and to determine internal site trip containment. The residential journey purposes and percentages in each peak hour are presented below in Table 1.

*Table 1: Residential trips by journey purpose (NTS)*

Trip Purpose	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour
Commuting / Business	42%	46%
Education / Escort Education	25%	2%
Shopping	5%	13%
Personal Business	22%	23%
Leisure / other	6%	16%
Total	100%	100%

Of the residential trips in group in each journey purpose category, 5% are assumed to travel to employment locations within the new site. The same has been applied to other residential to education at 50%, shopping at 35%, leisure at 10% internal and people visiting friends at 20%. All 'person business trips' are assumed to be made external to the site, with no internal trip movements assumed.

For the Staplegrove East site, a similar set of internal trip movements are assumed, with only changes identified to leisure (35%) and shopping (100%), to reflect a greater mix of land uses. Whilst Highways England believes internal shopping trips to be a little over optimistic given the limited retail offering proposed at the site, it is not believed that this would impact on the volume of development trips traveling through M5 Junction 25. Retail shopping trips would be largely contained within Taunton itself. On this basis, Highways England accepts these results.

Residential development traffic for both Staplegrove West and East sites has been distributed over the local highway network using 'journey to work' census data (2011) for commuting/business purposes, and using a P/T2 gravity model within a 45-minute (approximately) drive time for other journey purposes.

Employment trips have been distributed using journey from Work census data (2011) and all trip assignment has undertaken using Google maps.

The principle of trip distribution/assignment is accepted by Highways England, although the TA does not quantify development trips impacting on M5 Junction 25 during the peak hours. As such, from the information presented in the TA it is not possible for Highways England to determine development (overall development) traffic impact severity on the SAN. This information is required.

### Traffic impact

At this time, the i-transport TA does not present development trips travelling as far as M5 Junction 25 during the AM and PM peak hours, and as such, Highways England is not able to determine traffic impact severity and reach a positive recommendation on the planning application submission.

Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (December 2014), identifies existing congestion hotspots in the borough and the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Core Strategy objectives and development allocations. Para. 3.34 states that there are a number of major highway schemes required to deliver the Core Strategy, of which 'improvements to J25 of the M5' are identified, but that a scheme is 'subject to active funding bids to the Local Growth Fund'.

It is understood that Somerset County Council (in conjunction with Highways England) are currently seeking funding for a M5 Junction 25 improvement scheme, which includes full signalisation of the junction, although the certainty of such a scheme is currently unknown.

Highway England takes the view that if a fully funded improvement scheme is identified for M5 Junction 25, and the modelling work undertaken for this scheme is consistent with the i-transport TA proposals (and further information requested by Highways England), then the proposals would be acceptable for SAN impact.

In this situation, it is anticipated that Highways England would need to recommend that a Grampian planning condition be placed on any permission granted for the Staplegrove proposals, ensuring that the scheme is in place prior to site occupation, and/or phased if possible. Highways England would be open to considering a case for phased development in relation to the improvement scheme, but we would need to be provided with the necessary analysis to determine if this approach is possible.

### Capacity Assessment Scenarios

Somerset County Council's Taunton Strategic Traffic Model 3 (TSTM3) has been used to identify 2018 traffic flow scenarios inclusive of committed development traffic/infrastructure. TEMPRO has then been used to factor 2018 TSTM3 traffic levels to a 2028 level. This has used factors from the Taunton area using 'all areas' and 'principal roads'. The Staplegrove East and West developments were manually removed from TEMPRO in identifying growth factors, as to avoid double counting.

Traffic flows -used for capacity assessment are presented for the year 2028, which is anticipated to be the year in which the full development is completed. Traffic flows have been used to undertake capacity assessments for the local highway network, but no assessments have been provided for the SRN.

Should a Core Strategy improvement scheme for M5 Junction 25 not occur, it will be required that the junction is assessed as part of the Staplegrove planning application submission, subject to the volume of trips anticipated to travel through this junction during the weekday peak hours. This will only be known once

residential trip rates have been revised and trip distribution/assignment has been extended as far as the SRN.

Should a capacity assessment of M5 Junction 25 be required, Highways England's policy requirements set out in Circular 02/2013 requires two assessment scenarios to be considered. The first is the initial opening year of the development, which is assumed to be the year when the first part of the development is open for occupation. This assessment must include traffic associated with the FULL development proposals, taking account of background traffic, the potential for trip netting associated with extant land uses and committed development traffic. The opening year test will determine whether the impact of the development on the SRN would be severe and if mitigating measures are warranted.

There is also a requirement to test a future horizon period of 10 years following the registration of the planning application, or the end of the relevant local plan review period, whichever is greater. There is however no requirement to provide mitigation for this assessment, as the information is to be used by Highways England for information purposes only.

### Summary

Following our recommendation of non-approval dated 16 March 2016 we have received no additional information to address our outstanding concerns. We are therefore extending the recommendation of non-approval for a further three months.

Following an audit of the i-transport TA for Staplegrove West, but with a view to considering the wider Staplegrove proposals, the following points have been identified for further clarification/information:

- Further information is required to justify the use of the trip rates used in the TA, or a sensitivity test is required to present more robust residential trip rate values;
- Trip distribution/assignment should be extended to identify peak hour trips travelling on and through M5 Junction 25;
- It is understood that Somerset County Council are in the process of identifying a scheme for M5 Junction 25 to accommodate Core Strategy development, of which the Staplegrove proposals are an allocated site. When this scheme is identified, Highways England will be in a position to condition this scheme to render the development proposals acceptable for SAN impact.
- If the applicant would prefer to present an independent view on capacity, then a capacity assessment of M5 Junction 25 will be required to determine the severity of the development trips impacting on the SAN. Mitigation should be identified and presented in accordance with Circular 02/2013, if necessary.

### Recommendation:

Highways England recommends that Taunton Deane Borough Council do not grant planning permission to the Staplegrove development proposals (reference: 34/16/0007) for a period of 3 months.

Reason: To give the applicant sufficient time to address outstanding Highways England concerns.

*(Highways England, further comments received 15th December 2016)*

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the current of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 " *The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development*" and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### Statement of Reasons

The Staplegrove West proposals comprise 713 residential dwellings (mixed) and 1ha of 81(c) / 82 / 88 employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA). Development is to be phased around an internal site spine road which will connect both the Staplegrove West and East proposals.

Whilst not part of this planning application submission, the Staplegrove East proposals (WSP) include 915 residential dwellings (mixed), 1ha of B1(c)/B2/B8 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA), including a local centre and a two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils).

In terms of development phasing, the Transport Assessment (TA) indicates that phase 1 development would commence before the internal spine road is completed, and for each development site this level of development would include:

- 326 residential dwellings, the primary school and 0.5 hectares of employment land on Staplegrove East
- 200 residential dwellings on Staplegrove West

### Trip Rates / Trip Generation

The applicant presented two-way residential trip rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM). The peak hour trip rates are low for standard private housing, but represent a combined mix of housing types and tenure, inclusive of flats and affordable housing provision, for which display lower trip rate values. As such, the residential trip rates have been accepted.

For employment, B1 office development is explicitly excluded from the type of development that can occupy the site, and this is to be controlled via a planning condition. This was discussed and agreed in the TA between Highways England and the applicant. B1(a) office development is largest peak hour trip generator of all B1 land uses, but which is not assumed, nor tested in the planning application submission TA. As such, this level of traffic has not been tested for SRN impact and therefore is not supported by this planning application submission.

B1 employment is to be limited to B1(b) research and B1(c) light industry development and/or include B2 general industry and B8 storage land uses. A



combined industrial two-way employment trip rate of 1.166 (AM) and 0.815 (PM) has been agreed.

Due to the mixed land use nature of the proposals, the TA is able to command a sizable degree of trip internalisation. Highways England believes that some values are a little over optimistic for internalisation, related to land uses that do not produce wider strategic journeys made on the SRN. Convenience and education trips are largely assumed to be contained internal to the site, as would be expected with the provision of a new local centre and sizable primary school. Beyond the site boundary, trips will extend to neighbouring residential areas and Taunton centre, although no educational or convenience shopping trips are expected to travel on the SRN.

Total weekday peak hour trip generation (after internal trip deductions) is set out below.

	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Dep</u>	<u>Tot</u>	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Dep</u>	<u>Tot</u>
Residential	152	555	707	481	274	755
Employment	104	63	167	29	83	112
School	82	78	160	9	13	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>1034</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>889</b>

#### Trip Distribution / Assignment

Using National Travel Survey (NTS) data, a gravity model and 2011 Travel to/from work Census data, trip distribution has been identified for MS J25 for both employment and residential development trips. Highways England has accepted that 8% of development trips for residential and 13% of employment trips will travel via M5 J25, largely travelling to/from the general areas of Bridgwater and Yeovil. Given the position of the site, a number of trips that would travel to Bridgwater has assumed a route via Taunton Road and/or via the A38 and to Yeovil via Haydon Lane. Wellington is also a destination/origin for trips with the A38 offering the most direct and fastest journey option. This route through to M5 J26, has also been assumed for the small amount of development trips identified to travel south on the M5 to Exeter.

Whilst the agreement on trip distribution/assignment has resulted in several discussions, we believe the percentages now included in the TA are a good representation of the route traffic will take between origins/destinations. These results have been compared to Highways England's own trip distribution calculations using

2011 census data for the Taunton Deane MSOA (ref 008), and similar values have been realised.

Traffic assignment has taken account of the most direct or fastest route possible, considering local highway network constraints during weekday peak hours.

### SRN impact

For the Staplegrove proposals, Policy 21 of DfT Circular 02/2013 applies and states that, *' where development proposals are consistent with an adopted Local Plan, the Highways Agency (Highways England) does not anticipate the need for engagement in a full assessment process at the planning application stage. In such circumstances, considerations will normally be limited to the agreement of the details of the transport solution, including any necessary mitigation measures, and to ensuring that the transport impacts are included in the overall environmental assessment provided to the local planning authority, rather than the principle of the development itself'*.

The Staplegrove site is included within the Taunton Deane Borough Council Local Plan as a location for residential led development. Associated with the Local Plan, the Taunton Deane Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) dated December 2014, identifies existing congestion hotspots in the borough and the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Core Strategy objectives and development allocations. Para. 3.34 of the IDP states that there are a number of major highway schemes required to deliver the Core Strategy, of which 'improvements to J25 of the M5' are identified. Somerset County Council (in conjunction with Highways England) has identified an improvement scheme for M5 Junction 25 which includes full signalisation of the junction.

Whilst it is assumed that the IDP scheme will be implemented at MS J25 in the medium/long term, it has been a requirement for the Staplegrove proposals to determine their own development impact on M5 J25 for an opening year assessment of 2018. This is assumed to be the year when the first part of the development is open for occupation. This assessment does however include traffic associated with the full development proposals, taking account of background traffic growth and committed development traffic. This is in accordance with DfT Circular 02/2013.

Using a combination of 2014/2015 traffic and queue surveys and signal data, iTransport revalidated an existing LinSig model that was available for MS J25, and which was first created to support the planning application for the Comeytrove and Trull planning application (Ref:42/14/0069). On 8 December 2016, Highways England confirmed the successful validation of the baseline model and its use for considering forecast development scenarios. Full details regarding the models validation are set out in an i-Transport technical note dated 9 December 2016.

The main concern for Highways England is the MS J25 including the northbound and southbound off-slips, for which the MS southbound off-slip is a key concern in the AM peak.

The 'with' development scenarios include an 'impact' analyses of the extra queuing effect of the development at the 'peak' interval when using the existing queuing profile. This information is provided in addition to the LinSig results, which only reports the 'average' maximum queue change (based on an assumed uniform flow arrival on the slip-road over the 0800-0900 hour). The observed

queuing and how this changes shows that the arrivals on the MS southbound off-slip over this period are not uniform. The 2015 data show that the 'average' queue on the southbound slip-road (AM) when considering all three lanes is 71 vehicles. However, the queue data show that at times, queues can fluctuate and extend beyond this length and on the main-line M5 carriageway in this interval. The data show 'peak' queuing occurring at 0850 as 125 vehicles, with 80 of these is the centre lane on the M5 southbound off-slip. This would be sufficient to extend on the main-line MS carriageway in this interval.

The data show that the propensity for queuing to reach the main-line on the M5 southbound off-slip, and an existing problem evident from 2015 baseline data.

With combined Staplegrove development traffic (East and West sites), the MS southbound off-slip receives an extra 16 vehicles, increasing the expected flow on the off-slip in 2018 from 1,881vph to 1,897vph. This results in a 4 vehicle MMQ (mean maximum queue) change on the slip road. The Degree of Saturation on the MS southbound off-slip is largely unchanged, and delay (increases by about 2 seconds). In the PM peak, the junction is shown to operate with increased capacity compared to the AM peak, with the impact of the Staplegrove development traffic more concentrated on the local highway network approaches to the junction. This still has a small impact on SRN approaches, although only a single vehicle impact on the sensitive M5 southbound off-slip.

The 'peak' queuing (at 0850) is expected to rise from 125 to 141 vehicles in the 2018 base-line scenario, with 90 vehicles queuing in the middle lane. The effect of the additional Staplegrove traffic is expected to increase the length of this 'peak' middle lane queue by 3 vehicles in this critical period.

Based on the Mean Max Queue (MMQ) queue survey results presented above, it is evident that the development proposals do have a small impact on the operation of MS J25, with the largest impact concentrating on the sensitive MS southbound off-slip.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 32 and Circular 02/2013 paragraph 9 and 10, *'development proposals are likely to be acceptable if they can be accommodated within the existing capacity of a section (link or junction) of the strategic road network, or they do not increase demand for use of a section that is already operating at over-capacity levels, taking account of any travel plan, traffic management and/or capacity enhancement measures that may be agreed. However, development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe'*.

*'However, even where proposals would not result in capacity issues, the Highways Agency's (Highways England's) prime consideration will be the continued safe operation of its network.'*

It is clear in this case that the development proposals would increase demand for use of M5 J25 and that the junction is already operating at over-capacity levels. The development is therefore not acceptable without measures to offset the

impacts of the development. As the effect of the development would be to increase mainline queuing in terms of both length and duration, prejudicing the safe and efficient operation of the strategic road network, Highways England considers that the development proposals would have a severe impact at M5 J25. Mitigation measures are therefore necessary.

Highways England has considered a number of mitigation options at M5 J25 to safely accommodate the developments traffic impacts. The junction and especially the M5 southbound off-slip are constrained in terms of their ability to provide physical infrastructure/engineering improvements that will achieve improvements to capacity.

It is noted that the traffic signals present at the top of the slip roads at M5 J25 are controlled by a Vehicle Actuated (VA) system. Whilst a VA system allows the traffic signals a limited ability to react to changes in vehicle demands, the efficiency of the junction would be enhanced further, by the flexibility of signal timings possible through the provision of a MOVA (Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation) control system.

The upgrading of the signal technology to MOVA control is identified as appropriate mitigation for development traffic impacts. MOVA control will improve the performance and efficiency of the M5 southbound off-slip and wider junction, estimating an average 13% saving in delay, translating into an approximate 3% capacity increase. This is considered suitable mitigation to offset the traffic impact identified at the junction associated with the combined Staplegrove proposals.

On this basis, in light of the existing operational and physical constraints of M5 J25 and the scale of development impact identified, appropriate planning conditions have been identified which would render the development proposals acceptable in terms of SAN impact.

#### Summary:

Highways England provided a formal recommendation of non-approval for three months for this planning application on 16 March 2016. We extended this for a further period of three months on 15 June and again on 15 September. We have now reached a stage where we can provide the Planning Authority with informed comments to enable appropriate planning conditions to be recommended which we aim to do very soon. Because the current recommendation of non-approval expires on 15 December we are extending it for one month but hope to remove it before then. I have spoken with John Burton, the case officer who agreed with this approach.

#### Recommendation:

Highways England recommends that Taunton Deane Borough Council do not grant planning permission to the Staplegrove (West) development proposals (reference: 34/16/0007) for a further period of 1 month to give sufficient time to finalise conditions.

Final comments dated 29th March 2017.

Notice is hereby given that Highways England's formal recommendation is that we offer no objection.

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the current of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 *'The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development'* and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Statement of Reasons

The Staplegrove West proposals comprise 713 residential dwellings (mixed) and 1ha of mixed employment (equivalent to 6,666sqm GFA).

Development is to be phased around an internal site spine road which will connect both the Staplegrove West and East proposals.

Whilst not part of this planning application submission, the Staplegrove East proposals (represented by transport consultants WSP) include 915 residential dwellings (mixed), 1ha of 81(c)/82/88 employment (equivalent to 9,166sqm GFA), including a local centre and a two-form entry primary school (assumed to be 420 pupils).

In terms of development phasing, the Transport Assessment (TA) indicates that phase 1 development would commence before the internal spine road is completed, and for each development site this level of development would include:

- 326 residential dwellings, the primary school and 0.5 hectares of employment land on Staplegrove East
- 200 residential dwellings on Staplegrove West

Trip Rates / Trip Generation

The applicant presented two-way residential trip rates of 0.495 (AM) and 0.515 (PM). The peak hour trip rates are low for standard private housing, but represent a combined mix of housing types and tenure, inclusive of flats and affordable housing provision, for which display lower trip rate values. As such, the residential trip rates have been accepted.

81 employment is to be limited to 81(b) research and 81(c) light industry development and/or 82 general industry and 88 storage land uses. This is able to include an element of B1 office ancillary development, which is already taken account of in the trip rates derived from TRIGS. A combined industrial two-way employment trip rate of 1.166 (AM) and 0.815 (PM) has been agreed.

Due to the mixed land use nature of the proposals, the TA is able to command a sizable degree of trip internalisation. We believe that some assumptions are a little over optimistic for internalisation, be these mainly relate to land uses that do not generate journeys of a strategic nature likely to affect the SAN. Convenience

and education trips are largely assumed to be contained within the site, as would be expected with the provision of a new local centre and sizable primary school. Beyond the site boundary, trips will extend to neighbouring residential areas and Taunton centre, although no educational or convenience shopping trips are expected to travel on the SRN.

Total weekday peak hour trip generation (after internal trip deductions) is set out below.

	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	Arr	Dep	Tot	Arr	Dep	Tot
Residential	152	555	707	481	274	755
Employment	104	63	167	29	83	112
School	82	78	160	9	13	22
Total	338	696	1034	519	370	889

### Trip Distribution / Assignment

Using National Travel Survey (NTS) data, a gravity model and 2011 Travel to/from work Census data, trip distribution has been identified for M5 J25 for both employment and residential development trips. Highways England has accepted that 8% of development trips for residential and 13% of employment trips will travel via M5 J25, largely travelling to/from the general areas of Bridgwater and Yeovil. Given the position of the site, a number of trips that would travel to Bridgwater have assumed a route via Taunton Road and/or via the A38 and to Yeovil via Haydon Lane. Wellington is also a destination/origin for trips with the A38 offering the most direct and fastest journey option. This route through to M5 J26, has also been assumed for development trips identified to travel south on the M5 to Exeter.

The percentages now included in the TA are believed to be a good representation of the routes that traffic will take between origins/destinations. These results have been compared to Highways England's own trip distribution calculations using 2011 census data for the Taunton Deane MSOA (ref 008), and similar values have been realised.

Traffic assignment has taken account of the most direct or fastest route possible, considering local highway network constraints during weekday peak hours.

### SRN Impact

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of major highway schemes required to deliver the Core Strategy, of which 'improvements to J25 of the M5' are identified. Somerset County Council (in conjunction with Highways England) have identified an improvement scheme for M5 Junction 25 which includes full signalisation of the junction.

Whilst it is assumed that the IDP scheme will be implemented at M5 J25 in the medium term, it has been a requirement for the Staplegrove proposals to determine if their own impact can be accommodated at the junction in advance of the IDP scheme.

With combined Staplegrove development traffic (East and West sites), traffic modelling shows that the MS southbound off-slip receives an extra 16 vehicles in the AM peak, increasing the expected flow on the off-slip in 2018 from 1,881vph to 1,897vph. This modest increase in traffic flow would result in a 4 vehicle increase on the slip road and a 2 second increase in journey delay. In the PM peak, the junction is shown to operate with increased capacity compared to the AM peak, with the impact of the Staplegrove development traffic more concentrated on the local highway network approaches to the junction. This still has a small impact on SAN approaches, although only a single vehicle impact on the sensitive M5 southbound off-slip.

Somerset County Council's improvement scheme for J25 (anticipated for 2020/21) will include significant junction enhancements (including the installation of a fully signalised roundabout) which will accommodate Local Plan allocated developments including the Staplegrove proposals. By this time the developer anticipates a relatively small proportion of houses will have been built.

On this basis, Highways England's recommendation is one of no objections.

#### *HOUSING ENABLING –*

25% of the new housing should be in the form of affordable homes. The tenure split should be 60% social rented 40% intermediate housing in the form of shared ownership.

The type and size of the affordable housing units to be provided should fully reflect the distribution of property types and sizes in the overall development. 10% of the total affordable housing provision should be in the form of fully adapted disabled units. These homes should comply with a recognised and approved wheelchair design guide.

I have looked into the identified housing need for Staplegrove and the surrounding area and the required mix would be:

- 15% 1 beds to include some flats and some maisonette style properties with own garden and own front door
- 40% 2 beds to include some flats and houses
- 35% 3 bed houses
- 10% 4 bed houses



It is noted that Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 is being wound up and we would therefore seek for the properties to be constructed to the relevant standards that supersede this at the date of approval of the planning application.

Whilst no indication of the location of the affordable units within the scheme has yet been provided, this should be an integral part of the development and should not be visually distinguishable from the market housing on site. In addition, the affordable housing is to be evenly distributed across the site/phases and in clusters of no more than 15 units. The practicalities of managing and maintaining units will be taken into account when agreeing the appropriate spatial distribution of affordable housing on site.

Additional guidance is available within the Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The affordable housing scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Housing Enabling Lead at Taunton Deane Borough Council. Early engagement with the Housing Enabling Lead to agree the affordable housing provision is recommended.

The developer should seek to provide the Housing Association tied units from Taunton Deane's preferred affordable housing development partners list.

#### *POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICER –*

Crime Prevention Design Advisor's (CPDA) working in partnership within the South West region, have a responsibility for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design projects within the Taunton Deane Borough Council area. As a Police Service we offer advice and guidance on how the built environment can influence crime and disorder to create safer communities addressing the potential of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sections 58 and 69 of the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 both require crime and disorder and fear of crime to be considered in the design stage of a development and ask for:-

"Safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion."

Guidance is given considering 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design', 'Secured by Design' principles and 'Safer Places'.

Comments:-

1. Crime & ASB Statistics- reported crime for the area of the proposed development during the period 01/09/2015 – 29/02/2016 (within 500 metre radius of the grid reference) is as follows:-

Burglary - 2 Offences (both non-dwelling)

Violence Against the Person - 1 Offence

Total - 3 Offences

Currently, this is a very low crime level.

ASB reports for the same area and period total 2, which is also a very low level.

2. Design & Access Statement – the DAS at para. 5.13 headed ‘Community Safety’ refers to the seven attributes of safe, sustainable communities particularly relevant to crime prevention, which indicates to me that the applicants have considered these principles in the design of the proposal. At this outline stage, it is difficult to provide specific advice, however, I would make the following initial observations:-

3. Layout of Roads & Footpaths – vehicular and pedestrian routes should be designed to be visually open and direct and likely to be well used. They should not undermine the defensible space of neighbourhoods. As far as is possible, routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles should run alongside one another and not be segregated.

4. Communal Areas - such as playgrounds and seating areas have the potential to generate crime, the fear of crime and ASB. They should be designed to allow supervision from nearby dwellings with safe routes for users to come and go. Boundaries between public and private space must be clearly defined and open spaces must have features which prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

5. Layout & Orientation of Dwellings – dwellings should be positioned facing each other to allow neighbours to easily view their surroundings and make the potential offender feel vulnerable to detection. The principle of ‘public fronts’ and ‘private backs’ should be adopted wherever possible.

6. Dwelling Boundaries – it is important that the boundary between public and private areas is clearly defined. For the majority of developments, it is desirable for dwelling frontages to be open to view to assist resident surveillance of the street and public spaces, so walls, fences, hedging should be kept low, maximum height 1 metre. More vulnerable side and rear of buildings require more robust defensive barriers in the form of walls, fencing, hedging or similar to a minimum height of 1.8 metres. Commercial units may require additional measures.

7. Rear Access Footpaths – research shows that the majority of burglaries occur at the rear of dwellings, so it is preferable that footpaths are not placed at the back of properties.

8. Planting/Landscaping – planting should not impede opportunities for natural surveillance and, in areas where visibility is important, shrubs should be selected which have a maximum growth height of 1 metre and trees should be devoid of foliage below 2 metres, so allowing a 1 metre clear field of vision. Open branched and columnar trees should be used in a landscaping scheme where natural or formal surveillance is required. Care should also be taken to avoid any potential hiding places.

9. Building Design – Blank building elevations, both commercial and residential, should be avoided so providing a sense of natural surveillance to the development. Any potential climbing aids should be designed out and the potential vulnerability of roofs taken into account in respect of the commercial units.

10. Security Bollards/Street Furniture – any commercial premises where there is a possibility of a vehicle borne attack should be protected by secure bollards, either 'natural', fixed or rising bollards. Hard landscaping, e.g. planters or similar street furniture could be used. Public Art and similar features should be of substantial construction and vandal resistant.

11. Street Lighting – street lighting for adopted highways and footpaths, private estate roads and footpaths and car parks should comply with BS 5489-1:2013. Lighting should be set at a uniform level ensuring that there are no over lit areas causing light pollution nor poorly lit areas where crime or ASB could flourish.

12. Car Parking (Residential) – cars should be parked in locked garages or on a hard-standing within the dwelling boundary. Where communal parking areas are essential, they should be in small groups, close and adjacent to homes they serve and within view of active rooms in those homes. Rear car parking courtyards are discouraged as they introduce access to the vulnerable rear elevations of dwellings where the majority of burglaries occur.

13. Secured by Design (SBD) – the applicant is encouraged to refer to the additional comprehensive advice contained within the 'SBD New Homes 2014' and 'Commercial 2015' design guides, together with the interactive CAD 3D design guides, available on the police approved SBD website – [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com). If planning permission is granted, I would be pleased to work with the applicant at the detailed design stage in order to 'design out' crime and disorder in this major mixed use redevelopment.

#### *LANDSCAPE OFFICER (TDBC) –*

The Methodology and terminology for the Landscape assessments for both Staplegrove West and Staplegrove East was agreed with the Council and the two landscape consultants working on the two developments, prior the submission of this application. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by the Richards's Partnership has been submitted in support of the western section of the Staplegrove urban extension.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is intended as a tool to assist with the trial of the design of the proposal and enables opportunities to avoid, reduce or mitigate against impacts on the landscape, and views of the development. I consider the submitted LVIA produced by Richards's Partnership to be in accordance with The Landscape institute's Guidelines for landscape and visual Impact Assessment- Third edition (2013), as well as Natural England's approach to Landscape Character assessment 2014

The LVIA provides an introduction to the development, describes the methodology used, and gives a baseline description of the site, and legislative and policy framework relevant to the development. Relevant planning policies have been listed and general previous studies have been consulted. The effects of night lighting has been considered within a separate chapter.

The LVIA sets out to demonstrate how the urban extension is a suitable response to the site and its setting within the landscape. The document recognise the

importance of Rag Hill Special landscape Area (SLF), Staplegrove Green Wedge and views to and from the Quantocks AONB.

The development site mainly sits to the immediate south of the SLF but a small section sits within the SLF on the western face of Rag Hill as it wraps around to meet Staplegrove Road. The ridgeline of Rag Hill currently forms the northern boundary to the landscape setting of Staplegrove village. The subtle open ridge presently provides views to the Quantocks AONB to the north. These views will become filtered as the open character of Rag Hill changes over time to one of a treed skyline.

The greatest impact on the SLF would arise from the construction of the new Silk mills junction.

Staplegrove Green Wedge is located to the SE of the development site. The extension, as proposed by the SADMP, extends northwards from the existing wedge. The GI strategy also proposes extending the Green wedge into the countryside north of Corkscrew Lane, centred on Whitemore Lane and the Mill lease stream. The Wedge will help to maintain separate identities for the Staplegrove West proposal as an extension of Staplegrove village and the Staplegrove East proposal as an extension to Taunton.

The easternmost field of this development is proposed within the wedge which is unfortunate as I consider that the wedge should be as wide as possible to accommodate its multi-function use

The LVIA makes an assessment of landscape character and visual impacts separately in accordance with good practice. The document refers to the National Landscape Character Areas, the Council's four relevant Landscape Character Areas and then goes on to subdivide these areas further into nine Local landscape character Areas. (NB Staplegrove East has been divided up into a further six landscape character areas.) The impact on character of most of these areas was considered mainly minor but two of these areas were judged to be Major adverse. This is due to the change from agricultural land (including the loss of hedgerows) to built form. The LVIA found a number of significant adverse effects during the construction period, mainly concentrated on views in close proximity of the application site. In the long term these effects would diminish.

Tables include a comprehensive assessment on the effect on the landscape or visual resource (receptor) together with judgements on elements such as value, susceptibility, sensitivity, magnitude of change and type of effect. The tabulated effects are summarised and a conclusion is given on the significance of the effects

### Visual Context

The LVIA gives an assessment of the potential effects on the visual receptors and conclusions on the level of the effect resulting from the scheme. The visual assessment has been made using 15 viewpoints taken around the site and up to 6km distant to north at Cothelstone Hill located in the Quantocks AONB.

The viewpoints were agreed prior to submission of the planning application.

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This selection of viewpoints cover a good range of receptors. Visual considerations relate to views of the landscape afforded by people in the context of sensitivity to the views.

The document assumes that the developments of both Staplegrove East and West, (the boundary of which is along Whitmore lane) will come forward in time. However, the assessment considers the scenario whereby the spine road would come forward without Staplegrove East. This is considered to be the worst case scenario and is considered unlikely to take place.

The document also considers cumulative effects of development. (GLVIA 3 guidance refers to cumulative effects as the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of developments taken together .These can be landscape or visual effects likely to occur where inter visibility of the development allows two or more to be seen from key viewpoints.)

The visual receptors most affected by the proposal would be residents on Whitmore lane. There will be no significant adverse effect on visual receptors in the Quantocks  
AONB

The document looks at the predicted and operational effects of Staplegrove West and goes into the scope of mitigation and enhancement for the short term and long term.

In consideration of the LVIA the development and associated landscape strategy states that the development will

- Where possible the proposed development has been configured to retain existing trees and hedgerows and integrate them into the layout, thus maintaining important features and helping to retain a 'sense of place'.
- The designers have been mindful of the necessary set back distances from retained trees and hedgerows as identified within the arboricultural assessments.
- The built development has been configured to locate the lowest density housing in the northern part of the development adjacent to the existing countryside.
- Built form has been pulled back from the western face of Rag Hill.
- Existing north south links, including footpaths and road, would be retained and reinforced with additional planting to strengthen green infrastructure links.
- An 18m wide buffer of native planting would be introduced along the Application Site's northern boundary. As well as providing an ecological corridor, this would help to soften and filter views of the development when viewed from the north.

- Buffer planting would be introduced along the top of the western face of Rag Hill to help soften and filter views of the development from the west.
- Tree planting would be introduced on the western face of Rag Hill to help mitigate the effects of the new Silk Mills Junction.
- Tree planting would be introduced throughout the streetscape, which would help to soften the development and assist it in assimilating with the wider environment. It is anticipated that residents would also plant additional trees within private gardens.
- The planting would be predominantly native, or cultivars thereof, in order to blend with the surrounding area as well as providing ecological benefit and mitigation.
- Building heights would vary from 10.5 to 11.75 for residential to 11 to 12 for non-residential.
- Building materials have been chosen to reflect the local vernacular, while at the same time providing a contemporary flavour. Materials would include, local stone, brick, timber cladding and render and would fall within a neutral, but warm, colour spectrum.
- Areas of public open space have been located where existing properties front onto roads or the landscape, such as Rectory Road and Sandene Close.
- A series of 'pocket parks' have been included along the northern boundary, these would, in time, afford views beneath the canopies of the trees out to the landscape to the north, while at the same time providing a screening/filtering function when viewed from the north.
- Development has been designed to overlook the Green Wedge (although it encroaches into the proposed wedge extension), providing an attractive outlook as well as natural surveillance.
- The southernmost field adjacent to the Conservation Area is proposed as allotments and attenuation, to avoid locating built form in this area.
- There would be no built development in the field to the north of Langford Bridge, only SuDS areas; this would keep the approach to Taunton from the west open and 'green'.
- The existing electricity lines are proposed to be undergrounded, this would involve the removal of six pylons and the relocation of one.
- Retention of the West Deane Way in a green corridor approximately 17m in width

The scheme has many positive features as listed above but there are also some less desirable features such as

- The development will impact on existing landscape features in the form of removal of existing hedgerow and the felling of existing trees.
- Development will have an impact on the setting of Rag Hill SLF and an impact on Hestercombe House SAC, hence the need for extensive tree planting.
- In the worst case scenario two new terminal towers (25m high?) will need to be installed some 60m north of the existing pylons.
- Construction of the new silk mills junction which involves the removal of vegetation along a 70 stretch of Staplegrove Road followed by the excavation at the mouth of the new junction which would involve the removal of a large amount of material to facilitate levels for the new road.

### Conclusion

On balance, when the positive and negative aspects of the proposal are considered, at least in relation to landscape and visual aspects; I consider that the proposals are acceptable and would not cause an unacceptable level of negative impact. Distance views of the development from the Quantocks AONB will appear in context of the town, as the development will sit well below the skyline.

The applicant appears to have a good appreciation of the scheme design and has recommended appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. A strong integral landscape strategy has been used to direct the development. I consider that the benefits of the scheme in delivering much needed housing outweigh the negative and mainly local effects. I conclude the LVIA to be sound and reliable as it uses up to date and current guidance.

The success of the landscape strategy will depend on landscape management and maintenance establishment of woodland buffer and SUDs features. There is no mention at this outline stage on who will maintain the landscaping.

I agree that, along with full details of proposed landscaping, a detailed Construction management Plan (CEMP) as well as a Landscape and Ecological management plan (LEMP) should be prepared.

*(Further comments dated 9th January 2017)*

The replacement of the roundabout with a signalised junction will unfortunately still result in the felling of mature trees. The visual impact will remain the same.

### *THE QUANTOCK HILLS AONB SERVICE –*

Following detailed comments made by the AONB Service in respect of The Staplegrove Framework and Development Plan (25 February 2015) the AONB Service has not been contacted directly to discuss its comments ahead of this application for outline permission. This proposal, alongside applications for the east-west spine road and East Staplegrove represents a major development into open agricultural land that is visible from, and provides a setting to, the nationally protected Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is in the nation's interest to protect this very special landscape from the potential harm of development.

The AONB Service makes the following comments:

We are realistic about, and do not object to, the principle of development on the northern edge of Taunton. Nonetheless we are very concerned about the scale of this development. The West Staplegrove development (combined with the road and the adjoining development to the east) will lead to the loss of a large area of the agricultural land. This land forms part of the vale that offers a clear sense of separation between the urban environment of Taunton and the gateway to the Quantock Hills at Kingston St Mary. We are concerned that loss of a significant amount of open agricultural land will result in a marked, visible reduction in the gap between urban environment and nationally protected landscape – with urban fringe influences e.g. highways infrastructure and urban lighting moving ever closer to the boundary of the protected landscape.

The location of the east–west spine road on higher ground in the northern half of the site is a major concern because of visibility of the road (particularly ahead of maturity of proposed tree planting around Rag Hill) during the day and at night (which is noted in the lighting assessment).

We are also concerned that the direct access of the east-west spine road onto Kingston Road may result in increased traffic flow over the Quantocks (for drivers with a Bridgwater or M5 north destination or requiring access to transport links to Hinkley Point) which would have an adverse impact on the rural road network and tranquillity levels in the protected landscape. Has this been considered?

The proposed roundabout on Kingston Road may also adversely affect the character of this route into the Quantock Hills – urbanising the road access to the hills.

The undergrounding of electricity power lines will lead to two terminal towers – one of which is proposed in the northeast part of the site and likely therefore to be visible en route along Kingston Road into the Quantocks. Whilst undergrounding cabling would have a positive aesthetic effect within the development site, we are concerned that one of the resultant terminal towers will be another incongruous structure in the same viewshed as the existing pylons that extend across Kingston Road. Has the undergrounding of pylons beyond the site boundary been considered as mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to development? We request that this point be made to the applicant.

We are happy to discuss the points raised at any time and welcome a meeting with yourself and your Landscape Officer to discuss the potential impacts on the Quantock Hills.

*TREE OFFICER -*

*(Initial comments of 9th may 2016)*

In general, there are numerous mature trees throughout the site, mainly within the existing countryside hedgerows.

a) The layout and design of the development should aim to retain and incorporate as many of the most significant trees throughout the site. These trees should be seen as an asset to the development.



- b) Most of the significant trees in the area have already been protected by Tree Preservation Orders. I have attached an overall plan from 'Mapinfo' showing the protected trees in red. I have also attached the relevant TPO documents.
- c) There may be other significant trees, not yet protected by TPO, which should be retained, along with as much of the existing countryside hedgerows as possible.
- d) The development should be designed so that it takes account of the findings of a full BS5837 tree survey and its resulting Tree Constraints Plan. The design should be such that it does not encroach upon the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of the trees that are to be retained. The design should be such that it can be built whilst the RPAs are fully protected by fencing in accordance with BS5837.
- e) The layout of the development should be such that it does not harm the significant trees that are just off-site.
- f) The current proposed Masterplan indicates that certain TPO trees are to be removed in order to make way for roads. It appears that trees T11 and T12 of TD1073 and T5 and T6 of TD1088 are under threat. I would like to see an attempt to re-design the road layout so that these trees can be retained.
- g) I would fully support new tree planting as part of the landscape scheme for the development, particularly native broadleaves and areas of new community woodland.

#### *SOMERSET ECOLOGY SERVICES -*

Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority may proceed with or consent to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

The County Ecologist has prepared two separate 'Tests of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), one for each of the Staplegrove applications, under a Service Level Agreement. These were then sent to Natural England for their comments. The mitigation for both applications has been dealt with as a cohesive whole and there are no issues have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements.

Following the new information provided under a Regulation 22 submission in December 2016, the County Ecologist commented further that he had reviewed the updated ecology material and considered that no update to the Habitats Regulations Assessment was needed.

#### *NATURAL ENGLAND –*

*(Original comments dated – 24th March 2016)*

The application site is approximately 3km south-west of Hestercombe House which is designated at a European level as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and at a national level as a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI). This site contains one of the two largest breeding roosts of lesser horseshoe bat in south-west England.

Natural England has previously advised on the mitigation measures required to ensure that adverse effects on the integrity of Hestercombe House are avoided. We were satisfied with the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (August 2014) for the Council's draft Sites Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) and have agreed the Statement of Common Ground with the developers and the Council. The proposals contained in the outline application appear to be in accordance with the previously agreed plans for the site.

The Council's Biodiversity Officer has recommended a condition relating to the need for an ecological management strategy to protect and enhance the development for wildlife and their habitats to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. We request that this condition also refers to the commitment to commence planting of replacement habitat no later than day one of the first phase of development.

Natural England requests that this condition or a separate condition also includes specific wording to ensure implementation of the various counteracting measures specified in the 2014 HRA (sections 33 — 40) which are required in order to avoid impacts on lesser horseshoes associated with Hestercombe House. These include buffer planting and lighting measures.

Section 40 of the 2014 HRA also specifies that project-level Appropriate Assessments are required for developments related to the Staplegrove extension. Natural England therefore advises that your authority should not grant planning permission at this stage. An Appropriate Assessment should now be undertaken, in order to assess the implications of the proposal for the European site, in view of the site conservation objectives. Natural England is a statutory consultee at the Appropriate Assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

In preparing the appropriate assessment, we recommend you refer to the following information:

- HRA for the draft SADMP (2014)
- Ecological section (and appendices) of the Staplegrove West Environmental statement

We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species. Natural England has published Standing Advice on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy. You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a

material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

The proposed development is within an area that Natural England considers could benefit from enhanced green infrastructure (GI) provision. As such, Natural England would encourage the incorporation of GI into this development.

Multi-functional green infrastructure can perform a range of functions including improved flood risk management, provision of accessible green space, climate change adaptation and biodiversity enhancement. The LPA should review the proposed green infrastructure carefully to ensure that:

- it can be established and provide the required level of mitigation within an acceptable period;
- the planting design, species mix and other aspects of the scheme are appropriate to their landscape setting; and
- the appropriate management of the green infrastructure is properly provided for in terms of funding and a long term management plan.

We would expect the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess and consider the other possible impacts resulting from this proposal on the following when determining this application:

- local sites (biodiversity and geodiversity)
- local landscape character
- local or national biodiversity priority habitats and species.

*(Further comments dated 21st September 2016)*

European designated sites – Hestercombe House Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Test of Likely Significance (“Habitats Regulations Assessment” (HRA)) has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC and has concluded that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC.

Natural England agrees with the conclusions in the HRA and supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. If these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and we would object on that basis.

*(Further comments dated 5th January 2017) –*

Please be advised that Natural England’s comments remain the same as those in relation to the Habitats Regulations Assessment contained in our letter of 21 September 2016.

### *BIODIVERSITY OFFICER –*

AA Environmental Ltd carried out the Ecological report for Staplegrove West, dated February 2016 whilst Wildwood Consultants have carried out the ecological report for Staplegrove East. The two ecologists have carried out extensive survey work on the site over a number of years.

The application site consists of improved grassland and arable fields with associated boundary hedgerows. The site is generally of low ecological value although it does contain features such as hedgerows, trees, ponds and woodland.

The site road lies partly within the Bat Consultation Zone for Hestercombe House SAC which supports a colony of lesser horseshoe bats. The mitigation strategy has been agreed with TDBC SCC and NE. Policy TAU 2 was tested against The Habitat Regs Assessment. The HRA concluded that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect on protected sites.

### Bats

Bat activity surveys were undertaken in, May and September 2014 and May 2015. No evidence of bats was recorded in the buildings present around Staplegrove farm. The buildings were considered to provide sub optimal roosting opportunities for bats. None of the trees to be felled were considered to be of value for bats. Bat activity was dominated by common pipistrelle with barbastelle, lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe being recorded. A small lesser horseshoe roost was recorded in the village of Staplegrove.

The development will impact on bats through loss of habitat so the mitigation approach has been led by specifications set out within the 2014 HRA for the SADAMP and the associated Habitat Evaluation methodology. In line with this document the HRA requires 16.27 ha of replacement habitat to be provided across the whole site, mainly along the northern boundary. The calculations include a time lag calculator so the planting can begin at the start of phase 1.

In addition to replacement habitat a purpose built new bat roost will be constructed to the north of the site allocation support the proposal to incorporate bat boxes into the design of the new houses.

### Birds

A total of 31 species of bird were recorded within the site. No evidence of barn owls was found in any of the buildings on site.

The development will result in loss of foraging and nesting habitat for birds. Vegetation should only be removed outside of the bird nesting season and vegetation to be retained should be protected.

I support the proposal to incorporate bird boxes into the design.

### Dormice

The dormice survey was carried out on site in 2014. Dormice were recorded on the eastern boundary edge of Staplegrove west. Dormice were also recorded in a number of hedgerows further to the east off site.

As the development is likely to impact on dormice an EPS licence will be required prior to the removal of hedgerows adjacent to the line of poplar trees. Designing of sensitive road junctions is advised to facilitate the dispersal of dormice

### Great crested Newts

Only one pond was located on the application site but a number of ponds within 500m were surveyed. GCN were recorded in a pond to the north of the spine road and a number of pond to the east of the application site boundary. Requirement for an additional licence for Great crested newts will depend on the proximity of the works to ponds and terrestrial habitat.

### Otters

No evidence of otters was found on site although otters are active in the area. The Back Stream could potentially be used for foraging or commuting.

### Lighting

dpa lighting consultants carried out an Environmental Lighting Impact assessment for Staplegrove West and East as well as solely for Staplegrove west.

The baseline survey for Staplegrove West comprised of 30 receptor locations (viewpoints). These relate to viewpoints related to the LVIA but also include additional locations for ecological or obtrusive considerations.

The application site is presently farmland, the only light source currently present are associated with a farmhouse and barns. The surveyor classes the site as E2 (rural) classification.

Introducing lighting into otherwise unlit environment cannot be achieved without impact. From an ecological viewpoint design measures will need to be applied to maintain dark corridors for bats.

On the assumption that the developments follow best practice in the control of obtrusive lighting and that the landscaping scheme is successfully established then light spill on sensitive habitats can be kept to a minimum.

Lighting in connection with the construction phase should be should be carefully controlled by a Construction Environmental Management plan (CEMP)

### Condition for protected species:

The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of a strategy( as modified to meet the requirements of any Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses) to protect and enhance the development for wildlife and their habitats has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be based on the advice of the submitted Environmental Statement dated February 2016, the advice of all the surveys undertaken for the site and further up to date surveys and include:

1. Details of protective measures to include method statements to avoid impacts on all wildlife during all stages of development;
2. Details of the timing of works to avoid periods of work when wildlife could be harmed by disturbance.
3. Measures for the enhancement of places of rest for, breeding birds and bats.
4. Details of a lighting strategy
5. A Construction Environmental management plan (CEMP)
6. A Landscape and Ecological management plan (LEMP)

Once approved the works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timing of the works, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The development shall not be occupied until the scheme for the maintenance and provision of the new bird boxes, bat boxes and related accesses have been fully implemented.

Thereafter the resting places and agreed accesses shall be permanently maintained.

Reason: to protect and enhance the site for wildlife.

#### Condition

Once the first phase of development has commenced Ecological monitoring of the site for a period of time to be agreed by the applicant, shall be undertaken

Reason: To ensure that the long-term management of the site is informed, to identify where the existing maintenance regime requires modification, to assess the efficacy of the EPS licenses and also to comply with the HRA

#### Informative Note

1. The condition relating to wildlife requires the submission of information to protect species. The Local Planning Authority will expect to see a detailed method statement clearly stating how wildlife and their habitats will be protected through the development process and be provided with a mitigation proposal that will maintain favourable status for these species that are affected by this development proposal.
2. The condition also requires the submission of a lighting strategy and a landscape and ecological management Plan for the site.
3. It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and the developer should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation .
4. Bats, Dormice and possibly great crested newts are known to use the site.

The species concerned are European Protected Species within the meaning of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. If the local population of European Protected Species are affected in a development, a licence must be obtained from Natural England in accordance with the above regulations.

NE requires that the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that derogation from the Habitats Directive is justified prior to issuing such a licence.

#### *SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST –*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this planning application. Our response covers both the direct environmental impacts of this development and our vision for how this development could contribute to a network of well connected green spaces across the town that bring multiple benefits for people and wildlife.

#### Environmental considerations

Somerset Wildlife Trust have worked in partnership with Somerset County Council to map the ecological networks in the county. Maps of Somerset's Ecological networks are now available to Local Planning Authorities through the Somerset Environmental Records Centre. Under the National Planning policy Framework Local planning Authorities should use the planning system to, *'...contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, ... minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline of biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'*

The proposed development is likely to contribute to the fragmentation of the woodland ecological network in this area as without careful landscaping, which should include the retention and restoration of hedgerows, woodland stepping stones around Staplegrove Manor will become isolated. This is particularly serious for lesser horseshoe bats from Hestercombe House SAC likely to be foraging in this area and for dormice recorded on site in the surveys forming the evidence base for the Environmental Statement.

Despite the land itself being of low ecological value, there are a number of European Protected Species using the site including 10 species of bat, great crested newts, badgers and dormice. This is not insignificant and demonstrates how green wedges can bring species like these closer to urban communities. We would recommend that as a planning condition detailed proposals must be approved by the Local Planning Authority that illustrate how this development will minimise the impacts on biodiversity. These proposals should show a willingness to go beyond statutory obligations and create a vibrant, wildlife-rich living space and must include the following information;

- A Construction Environmental Management Plan including information on the protection of water quality in Back Stream
- A Landscape and Ecological Management plan including information on the planting and management of orchards within the development site
- Details of how the development will maintain the coherence and resilience of ecological networks in the area, with particular focus on dormice and bat species

- Details of a lighting plan which will have minimal impact on foraging bat populations
- Details of off-site planting to mitigate for any on-site loss of habitat

#### A vision for a vibrant, wildlife-rich Taunton

Somerset Wildlife Trust is working across Taunton to bring people closer to the town's beautiful natural heritage through Routes to the River Tone project. We have a vision of a vibrant, wildlife-rich county town, shared with local communities and our partners, which we want to make a reality that lasts beyond the life of the current project. Just two years into three years of funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Routes to the River Tone is already igniting a spark in Taunton's residents, inspiring them to begin a journey of exploration, experiencing nature first hand with experienced and enthusiastic naturalists through events and activities right across the town.

Routes to the River Tone builds on the aspirations outlined in Taunton Deane's Core Strategy, which in recognition of the role the natural environment plays in attracting people, business and investment to the town, states "Developments will be well designed, taking cues from our distinctive character and enhancing our unique environment which plays such an important role in making the Borough of Taunton Deane so special"; supporting this are policies CP1 (Climate Change) and CP8 (Environment) which make provisions for coherent design and ecological enhancement through development. We urge Taunton Deane Borough Council to consider these policies carefully in regard to this planning application.

We welcome the inclusion of "Rectory Road Green Corridor" and the pedestrian links to the wider countryside but we feel that more could be done to compensate for the degree to which the proposed Staplegrove development disconnects Staplegrove Village and areas in North West Taunton from the wider countryside. Pedestrian links to the area around Mill Lease Stream should be improved, for example there is no access marked on the Landscape Plan where an existing Public Right of Way ends. Pedestrian access to the informal open space at the western end of the site should also be increased so that this site can act as a gateway to the wider landscape. Signs for other local green spaces such as Silk Mills LNR should be installed at these access points to encourage exploration by residents. An urban fringe development such as this should soften the lines between town and country, bringing wildlife into the development and allowing people to engage easily with the countryside.

To encourage the residents of this new development to make sustainable transport choices that will benefit their health and relieve pressure on the proposed spine road, cycle routes should be included throughout the development that link to north Taunton and into the town centre.

We welcome the inclusion of allotments, orchards and other open space within the development but we would suggest that some of these spaces are situated in a more central location as this will change the character of the development. People should be encouraged to travel through the open space on their way around the development to increase the number of encounters that they have with nature.



Open spaces on the periphery of a development can become underused as people need to make a particular effort to visit them.

By working with the local planning authority, developers and their consultants, we want to maximise opportunities to bring people and wildlife together in the built environment, creating spaces where wildlife and people can thrive together. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the local planning authority, developers and their consultants to discuss how we might be able to work together to realise our shared vision of showcasing the wonderful natural environment of Taunton and inspiring people to re-connect with the natural world around them.

*SCC (LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY), FLOOD RISK MANAGER – (Original comments made on 2nd March 2016).*

The applicant has provided, within the submitted Drainage Strategy, calculations which include for the use of a hydrobrake system to reduce flow rates for surface water runoff to 2 l/s/ha and for the use of attenuation ponds within the site development, these open attenuation ponds are indicated on drawings ref: Overall Surface Water Drainage Strategy, figures 4, 5, 6 and 7. The Overall strategy proposed would be supported in principle by the LLFA however, the applicant has not provided sufficiently detailed designs, or of supporting calculations at this stage for the capture and removal of surface water from the development. Due to the location of the site and the proposed increase in impermeable areas it will be necessary to provide these details.

The LLFA has no objection to the proposed development, as submitted, subject to the following drainage condition being applied.

CONDITION: No development shall be commenced until details of the surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles together with a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage strategy shall ensure that surface water runoff post development is attenuated on site and discharged at a rate of 2 l/s/ha or greenfield runoff rates, whichever rate is lower. Such works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

These details shall include: -

- Details of phasing (where appropriate) and information of maintenance of drainage systems during construction of this and any other subsequent phases.
- Information about the design storm period and intensity, discharge rates and volumes (both pre and post development), temporary storage facilities, means of access for maintenance (6 metres minimum), the methods employed to delay and control surface water discharged from the site, and the measures taken to prevent flooding and pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters.
- Anyworks required off site to ensure adequate discharge of surface water without causing flooding or pollution (which should include refurbishment of existing culverts and headwalls or removal of unused culverts where relevant).
  
- Flood water exceedance routes both on and off site, note, no part of the site must be allowed to flood during any storm up to and including the 1 in 30 event,

flooding during storm events in excess of this including the 1 in 100yr (plus 30% allowance for climate change) must be controlled within the designed exceedance routes demonstrated to prevent flooding or damage to properties.

- A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management company or maintenance by a Residents' Management Company and / or any other arrangements to secure the operation and maintenance to an approved standard and working condition throughout the lifetime of the development

REASON: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with paragraph 17 and sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015).

*(Additional comments received 1st April 2016 (following receipt of further information)).*

Amendments submitted are in response to Environment Agency (EA) comments on original application. Therefore the amendments should be referred back to the EA to address. The LLFA refer the LPA back to the original comments submitted on 2 March 2016 and has no further comments at this time.

#### *ENVIRONMENT AGENCY –*

*(Initial comments of 9th March 2016)*

In the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) we object to the grant of planning permission on flood risk ground. In particular, the submitted FRA fails to take the impacts of climate change into account based on the recently updated climate change allowances. As submitted the FRA, does not comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 9 of the Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework. The submitted FRA does not therefore; provide a suitable basis for assessment to be made of the flood risks arising from the proposed development.

The proposal is for a urban extension, in view of the sensitivity of the development in respect of delivery and vulnerability of the proposed residential led use it is important that the development is safe in flood risk terms for its lifetime (100 years for residential). Given the sensitivity of the proposal, the Environment Agency considers that it is essential the FRA is revised and considers the impact of the updated climate change allowances on the proposal. Details of the allowances can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

#### Overcoming our objection

The FRA should be revised to consider the impact of the recently revised climate change allowances (30%, 40% and 85%) on the proposed development. This is

important in demonstrating the overall safety of the proposal in flood risk terms for the lifetime of development, if this is not possible the Agency will maintain its objection to the proposal.

We would expect the applicant to assess the impact on the site for each scenario and propose adequate measures to address the impact of climate change. This is important in demonstrating the safety of the will influence the location of the proposed dwellings, finished floor levels and location of the surface water attenuation ponds.

Information addressing the above should be submitted directly to the local planning authority. We will provide bespoke comments within 21 days of formal re-consultation by the local planning authority.

Any correspondence regarding this matter should be directed to the Wessex Sustainable Places Team at [nwx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nwx.sp@environment-agency.gov.uk) .

#### Note to LPA

If you are minded to approve the application contrary to our objection, it is considered essential that you contact the Agency to discuss the implications prior to determination of the application. A copy of this letter has been sent to the agent. Please direct any enquiries regarding this matter to Richard Bull.

#### *(Additional comments dated 18th April 2016)*

Thank you for the additional information received 29 March 2016, concerning the above proposal. This comprises of a letter dated 17 March 2016 from the applicant's agent addressing the Environment Agency's concerns.

We can now WITHDRAW our earlier objection as, from the cross section details provided, we can see that the lowest elevation for the proposed dwelling will be at a level that would not be affected by flood flows from the Mill lease stream. This is even after taking account of the new climate change recommendations. We would however, recommend the Lead Local Flood Authority is consulted regarding the surface water details and attenuation.

This development may require a permit under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 from the Environment Agency for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within eight metres of the top of the bank of the Mill Lease Stream , designated a 'main river'. This was formerly called a Flood Defence Consent. Some activities are also now excluded or exempt. A permit is separate to and in addition to any planning permission granted. Further details and guidance are available on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>. The need for an Environmental Permit is over and above the need for planning permission. To discuss the scope of the controls please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506. Some activities are now excluded or exempt; please see the following link for further information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>. It must be noted that any works in proximity of a watercourse other than a main river, may be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Lead Local Flood Authority/Internal Drainage Board.

*(Further comments dated 3rd January 2017).*

In respect of the additional information concerning the above application, which was received on 15 December 2016, the Environment Agency's comments remain as contained in its letter dated 18 April 2016 regarding the proposal. Although we wish to make the following additional comments:

Otters are known to use the Back Stream and there used to be an old mill leat which used to feed Silk Mills, that came off the Back Stream. There is a culvert that remains from this under the B road, which is known to be used by otters to avoid crossing the road. Any changes to the road network around the Back Stream may require wildlife crossings or otter ledges to be installed, as the Back Stream through the Taunton area on the A358 is a known otter road death black spot.

#### *WESSEX WATER –*

The site will be served by separate systems of drainage constructed to current adoptable standards - please see Wessex Water's S104 adoption of new sewer guidance DEV011G for further guidance.

The outline surface water strategy includes a number of catchments with surface water attenuated on site and discharged to a number of watercourses and existing public surface water sewers. Approval will be required from the LLFA in consideration of flood risk measures and agreement sought from Wessex Water where discharges are proposed to existing sewers.

Section 13.82 of the Environmental Statement advises: "The foul water drainage system to be installed as part of the proposed developments will ensure the foul discharge from both developments can be effectively managed. The system will be designed to ensure adequate capacity within the neighbouring system."

It is imperative that the design of drainage systems will be future proofed for subsequent phase(s). Initial foul network modelling for 1500 dwellings indicated 4 potential sewer connection and improvement options. As none of these options have been developed in accordance with phasing arrangements to outline foul drainage scheme please consider the use of a planning condition to ensure a strategy can be agreed prior to construction:

#### Foul Water, Planning Condition -

The development shall not be commenced until a foul water drainage strategy is submitted and approved in writing by the local Planning Authority in consultation with Wessex Water acting as the sewerage undertaker.

- a drainage scheme shall include appropriate arrangements for the agreed points of connection and the capacity improvements required to serve the proposed development phasing.
- The drainage scheme shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and to a timetable agreed with the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that proper provision is made for sewerage of the site and that the development does not increase the risk of sewer flooding to downstream property.

Water Supply modelling has indicated sufficient available capacity for the development subject to agreement of point(s) of connection. Buildings above two storeys will require on site boosted storage.

#### *SCC - RIGHTS OF WAY –*

I can confirm that there are 2 public right of ways (PROW) recorded on the Definitive Map which will be affected by this proposal at the present time (T 24/6 and T 24/15). T 24/6 forms part of the West Deane Way, a promoted long-distance circular walk.

#### Specific comments

Whilst the masterplanning process has incorporated these two PROW on their current alignment, it is not entirely clear as to what particular enhancement they will benefit from. The masterplan also lacks any reference to cycle access and given the potential for the two footpaths to act as arterial routes for sustainable transport in and out of Taunton, it would make sense to consider them (certainly south of the spine road) for potential conversion to cycle tracks (under Cycle Tracks Act) with an appropriate surface treatment and a commuted sum for future maintenance. It would also make sense for regular links to these paths to be provided from the adjacent residential areas to provide for pedestrian and cycle connectivity throughout. The developer should be required to explore the feasibility of this to encourage greater levels of sustainable travel modes, with inclusion of the above recommendation within the s106 agreement.

#### Generic comments

Any proposed works must not encroach on to the width of the footpath.

Development, insofar as it affects the rights of way should not be started, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until the necessary (stopping up/diversion) Order has come into effect. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with.

The health and safety of walkers must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of the footpath, but only to a standard suitable for pedestrians. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of the footpath resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.

In addition, if it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from SCC Rights of Way Group.

- A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
- New furniture being needed along a PROW.
- Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
- Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW.

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would

- make a PROW less convenient for continued public use (or)

- create a hazard to users of a PROW

then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided. A temporary closure can be obtained from Sarah Hooper on (01823) 483069.

#### *DIVERSIONS ORDER OFFICER –*

The Public Footpaths T24/26 and T24/15 are affected by this development proposal. The master plan shows that no change will be brought about to their alignment as shown on Definitive Rights of Way Map for the parish of Staplegrove. However, subject to planning consent being granted, adequate Health and Safety measures should be put in place and the widths of the paths should not be interfered with. There is every possibility that a Temporary Closure Order will be necessary. These may be obtained from Mr. Stuart Lloyd, Rights of Way Definitive Map Team, Somerset County Council.

#### *LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL -*

I have been asked to provide a County Council response in an educational needs context to these applications. TDBC are aware of the lack of capacity to accommodate any further numbers without delivery of an additional educational facility.

The site proposed in the indicative layout for the East application appears acceptable and without requiring significant engineering to develop although its location causes concern for delivery as the site appears inaccessible unless the infrastructure works are completed early.

However there are a number of issues that the Council request TDBC take into account that significantly affect deliverability;

#### Timescales -

- To provide local education places for these homes, we would need the site and access to the site immediately (before any houses have been constructed). This would provide the Council with the best chance of school delivery by the time this development produces more places than the surrounding schools can cope with (already considered to be at capacity). Any triggers set above 0 houses will result in a delay to delivery.
- Assuming access and site a school construction timescale is at least 18 months

#### Access -

- Access to site identified appears to be through developer built roads. Access cannot be achieved through Whitmore Lane.
- The school can only commence construction when there is suitable access. We would need this prior to the construction of any houses.
- Access to the site ideally needs to be already established (adjoining existing highway) to enable early delivery of education provision. We therefore

request an alternative site is identified that will enable delivery to coincide with need.

Site -

- An alternative site closer to existing highway network would allow an earlier timetable for delivery
- Minimum site area 2.1 hectares (assuming a regular shape)

Other -

- Confirmation as to how TDBC might link the East and West applications (We need a school site regardless of which development starts first).

Summary

The current proposed site would provide us with a good level site. However the access causes the Council great concern in terms of deliverability and school/pupil access. More information is required to provide certainty but initial thoughts are that school might not be achievable until 2021 at the earliest. Assuming this development starts in 2017/18, we should anticipate potentially needing to transport children for 4 to 5 years outside of the Staplegrove area.

The County Council welcomes the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue with TDBC and the applicants to enable school delivery to coincide with need.

*MINERALS AND WASTE PLANNING POLICY TEAM, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL* -

I write the following officer comments on behalf of the (minerals and waste) planning policy team at Somerset County Council (SCC) with regard to the above application, noting SCC's role as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Somerset (excluding Exmoor National Park). We appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Minerals safeguarding

We are pleased to note that a Mineral Assessment Report has been prepared as part of this application, having noted that the development is an area safeguarded by the adopted Somerset Minerals Plan for its minerals resources. The work done to establish the viability of extraction is welcome, and we note the conclusion of the applicant's assessment that:

"This study has demonstrated that the mapped deposit of the River Terrace Deposits on site, shown on the Somerset Minerals Plan as a Minerals Safeguarding Area does not contain an economically viable sand and/or gravel deposit. For this reason Policy SMP 9 does not apply for the site as an exemption is applicable on the basis that prior extraction is not practicable and/or viable and the merits of the development outweigh the safeguarding of the mineral."

Waste prevention

Current adopted policy is set by the Waste Core Strategy (adopted February 2013) and this forms part of the Development Plan. There are opportunities to minimise waste production at the design stage of any development; the bigger the project, the more important it becomes to have a strategic approach to construction, demolition and excavation waste management.

We are pleased to note that “a construction waste management scheme can also be considered at a more detailed stage” as referenced on page 74 of the Design & Access

Statement. To be clear, we would consider that such a waste management scheme is essential, not least as a matter of compliance with policy WCS1 in the adopted Waste Core Strategy.

In addition to local waste planning policy, national waste planning practice guidance highlights the value of significant developments including a waste audit (see Paragraph: 049 Reference ID: 28-049-20141016). Set in this context, we promote the use of Site Waste Management Plans (SWMPs), noting there are demonstrable benefits in terms of cost savings (from the efficient use of materials and less waste disposal) alongside the environmental benefits. There are various templates and tools available for developing SMWPs, including those available from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) website: [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk).

#### Recycling and reuse

Policy WCS2 of the adopted Somerset Waste Core Strategy encourages the provision of adequate space and facilities to enable effective separation, temporary storage and collection of waste. Furthermore, national waste planning practice guidance supports the application of the waste hierarchy by non-waste planning authorities (Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 28-010-20141016); and this support is also made explicit in paragraph 8 of the National Planning Policy for Waste. Set in this context, it is important that the applicant considers at the design stage how the developer can facilitate recycling and the collection of waste. Focusing on the residential development, reference should be made to the Developer Guidance available from the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Also we highlight that Policy WCS2 requires effective access for waste collection and recycling vehicles. Colleagues from our Transport and Development Group will be able to provide further comment on highway standards in their capacity as the Highway Authority.

#### *(Further comments from Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team, dated 6th December 2016)*

I write on behalf of the (minerals and waste) planning policy team at Somerset County Council (SCC) with regard to the above application, noting SCC's role as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Somerset (excluding Exmoor National Park). We appreciate the opportunity to comment.

The applicant's statement on planning policy unfortunately fails to acknowledge that the adopted Somerset Minerals Plan (2015) and the Adopted Waste Core (2013) forms part of the development plan. Having said that both matters have been addressed.

Minerals matters are considered within “Ground conditions”: chapter 14. To this end, I note the finding based on British Geological Survey data refer to superficial deposits of unconsolidated sediments such as gravel, sand, silt. Having regard to Policy SMP 9 and the supporting “exemption list” as set out in Table 6 of the



Adopted Minerals Plan, I confirm that an exemption is applicable on the basis that prior extraction likely to be not practicable and/or viable and the merits of the development outweigh the safeguarding of the mineral.

With regard to waste Policy WCS2 of the adopted Somerset Waste Core Strategy encourages the provision of adequate space and facilities to enable effective separation, temporary storage and collection of waste. To this end, I am pleased to see details such as DrNo 0781-ATR-104 Rev A 11.4m Refuse Vehicle Tracking (4 of 5).

#### *SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP –*

We are pleased to be able to support you in fulfilling your statutory obligations to provide adequate storage space for household waste and to provide adequate access for collection of waste from the property. Please refer to our document “SWP Design Requirements for Residential Properties”, which can be found by visiting [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) and clicking “Business Advice”. This document should hold the information you require. However if you need specific advice which is not answered in this document please contact Somerset Waste Partnership at [enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@somersetwaste.gov.uk) and, resource permitting, we will try to help.

*ENGLISH HERITAGE NOW HISTORIC ENGLAND –  
(Original comments received 8th March 2016).*

At present there is no submitted heritage assessment of Pyrland Hall or its setting this is required in order to ensure that any harm resulting from the road and landscaping is minimised or avoided (Para 129 of the NPPF). Beyond this whilst we acknowledge that this application is in outline, photomontages should be provided from the two assets (at a minimum) in order to assess inter visibility and whether any harm identified can be mitigated or avoided.

The statutory focus for Historic England is the impact that the proposed development would have upon the setting of the Grade II\* assets that are within the area and the Staplegrove Conservation Area.

Yarde Farmhouse dates from the early 17th century with alterations from the mid-late 19th century. It is a vernacular farmhouse with a steeply pitched plain clay tile roof. In plan forms it comprises of three cells with a cross passage. In terms of its setting it is not formally designed but does have a strong connection to the agricultural landscape southeast of it. The second asset is Pyrland Hall which is not referenced within this application, though we are conscious that heritage assessments have been undertaken previously at the development plan stage. Whilst the housing element is to the west the spine road will extend close to the Pyrland. The previously drafted heritage assessments should form part of this application. The house dates from circa 1760. It is neo-classically proportioned and detailed and is set in a designed landscape. It is three storeys high and five three storeys, five bays, centre three break forward slightly single bay, single storey projecting wings. It was clearly positioned to take in a landscape setting to the southwest.

The proposed development is set to the southeast of Yarde Farmhouse and to the west of Pyrland Hall. As a result the development will potentially be visible from the highly graded assets and would be seen in conjunction with them from various points. Relative to the conservation area the new housing would enclose its extent at its western end though partially by landscaping and an attenuation pond.

Key to our consultation advice is the requirement of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in Section 66(1) for the local authority to “have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses”. Section 72 of the act refers to the council’s need to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area in the exercise of their duties. When considering the current proposals, in line with Para 129 of the NPPF, the significance of the asset’s setting requires consideration. Para 132 states that in considering the impact of proposed development on significance great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation and that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. It goes on to say that clear and convincing justification is needed if there is loss or harm. When considering development that has the potential to affect setting Historic England’s Advice Note 3, the Setting of Heritage Assets should be referred to.

From Pyrland Hall what appears to be a modern tree line has created a barrier probably to guard against intrusion from cars along the main road. On site the drive off the main road does rise quite markedly however increasing the buildings prominence enabling views towards it and from it. At this stage it is felt that there would be some inter-visibility with the relief road and landscaping. If this does equate to harm then it would be less than substantial. Given the size of the defined area it is likely that if there is harm a scheme could be developed to resolve any concerns.

Whilst Yarde Farm is a vernacular farmhouse without a formal designed view it does have a strong connection to the agricultural land southeast of it. My main concern with this asset is that the development should be set just to the south of Rag Hill to avoid a built roofline creeping over the ridge.

Recommendation - In its present form we are of the view that the council are not in a position to be able to determine the application as it is not possible to confirm that harm has been minimised or avoided (Para 129 of the NPPF). We are aware that a heritage assessment of Pyrland has previously been undertaken though we note that it is not submitted here - it is required. Beyond this photomontages are required, or a comparable exercise undertaken, to review the current scheme and its visual impact.

*(Further response from Heritage England dated 25th July 2016)*

At this stage it is not necessary for us to be consulted again. The additional information is helpful. At full application stage a further review will be required, alongside detailed plans and photomontages showing the proposed impact. Of the assets that have potential to be affected we are particularly interested to understand fully the impact upon the formal setting of Pyrland Hall, with its formal landscape. Also to date we have not had an opportunity to access Oakhill which would be surrounded by the development - access to better understand impact will be required.

#### *CONSERVATION OFFICER (HERITAGE) –*

I have reviewed the submitted Heritage Appraisal, Heritage Settings Assessment, and Heritage Conservation Strategy documents against the TDBC map data. I have not visited the sites specifically to assess the impact of the proposed scheme but I am familiar with many of the listed buildings affected.

I can confirm that there are no listed buildings within the development site but a number on the periphery, which are itemised in the submitted material. In some places the proposed development site also immediately abuts Staplegrove Conservation Area.

Having looked at individual buildings and the Conservation Area, the potential impact of the scheme on their setting may be slightly downplayed in the reports, for example Staplegrove Lodge, although this is a matter of judgement. Historic England in their consultation response have also raised concerns. I can, however, confirm that in no case is the harm greater than 'less than substantial' and this can be reduced by mitigation measures and under paragraph 134 of the NPPF weighed against the public benefits.

*SOUTH-WEST HERITAGE (ARCHAEOLOGY) -*

The site has been the subject of an archaeological evaluation which has shown the presence of locally significant archaeology. The details of the archaeology are presented in the applicant's application with a Statement of common ground (Socg). I agree with the Socg that the remains can be dealt with through a condition requiring the developer to excavate remains in advance of development. For this reason I recommend that the developer be required to archaeologically excavate the heritage

asset and provide a report on any discoveries made as indicated in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 141). This should be secured by the use of model condition 55 attached to any permission granted

"No development hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority."

*COMMUNITY LEISURE OFFICER -*

In accordance with Local Plan Policy C4, provision for children's play should be made for the residents of these dwellings.

Every family sized 2 bed+ dwelling should provide 20 sq. m. of both equipped and non-equipped play space. The equipped play spaces should be centrally located and over looked by front facing dwellings to promote natural surveillance. The layout of the equipped play spaces and the type of equipment within them should be agreed with the TDBC open spaces.

Outdoor recreation and playing field provision of 45 sq. m. should be provided. The layout of the open spaces, playing fields and planting to be agreed with TDBC Open Spaces.

713 dwellings will generate the need for a community hall, consisting of a main hall, toilet, kitchen and activity room.

Allotment provision of 15.4 sq. m. per dwelling should also be sought.

Open Spaces should be asked to comment on this application.

*(OPEN SPACES MANAGER – TDBC).*

For a community of 1600 homes we would recommend the following:

Allotments – 2.464 Hectares

The trigger point for provision of on-site is 374 x dwellings. Each dwelling generates a need of 15.4 sq.m. per dwelling so 15.4 sq.m. x 1600 = 24640 sq.m. or 2.464 hectares of allotment land.

### Equipped Public Playing Fields – 7.2 Hectares

Laid out and equipped formal sports but available to the general public at other times for informal recreation. The trigger point for on-site provision is 482 dwellings. Each dwelling generates a need of 45m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling so 45 x 1600 = 72000 m<sup>2</sup> or 7.2 hectares of equipped public playing fields. At this point we would not specify junior or senior pitches, just pitches. Any provision for schools within this development proposal do not count as part of TDBC's requirements.

In first instance allotment site(s) and playing pitches should be offered to the Parish Council, then the Borough Council and as a last resort a management company details of which to be submitted the Borough Council for approval.

### *SOMERSET CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP –*

SCCG has concerns regarding the impact of this proposed development on the local National Health Services and refer you to correspondence received by TDBC from Ian Longden, Primary Care Commissioning, NHS England Area Team (Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire). SCCG welcomes the opportunity for discussion.

### *NHS ENGLAND SOUTH, SOUTH WEST TEAM & NHS SOMERSET CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP -*

NHS England South South West Team welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed new developments in Taunton. The comments in this response should be used by the Planning Authority to relate to Infrastructure Requirements for NHS England to ensure access for residents of new residential developments to GP Primary Care services is secured.

The new homes in Taunton (Staplegrave) will generate a significant number of new residents who will all require access to Primary Care Services in the area including GP services.

NHS General Practices are a publically funded Community Infrastructure. The majority of comments are based on statutory responsibilities to provide healthcare facilities for the population of Somerset, which sets out how it will ensure easier access for residents of this new residential development to GP Primary Care services.

It is understood the Environmental Statement issued by the developer cites there is sufficient capacity with Taunton practices, and thus concludes no support is needed to enhance the Primary Care infrastructure as a result of the development. This assumption is challenged with further information and analysis to assess and confirm that the current NHS funded services are sufficient only for the current population with no additional capacity available to cater for the proposed increase in population to be generated by this application.

This response seeks to set out the nature and scope of NHS Community Infrastructure local to the development; assess the capacity and sustainability of the current provision; and state the net impact of the development, outlining the proposed response to the development.

By its nature it is not feasible to submit detailed plans for any necessary infrastructure at this stage for every planning application. NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England have developed Strategic Estates and Services' Plans taking account of proposed new housing. Outline solutions have been proposed for this application and once it is confirmed the development is to proceed, then detailed plans will be developed and implemented. These plans look to provide an equitable service offer through the development of Strategic Sites to meet current demand and for population growth for Taunton.

The Staple Grove application will contribute the need for additional capacity. The proposed solution proposed as a result of new housing will be needed on a gradual basis as houses are built and sold. This infrastructure will necessitate costs and building for the total of the new population with "void" space built in and then utilised gradually during the life of the proposed development until completion.

#### NHS England commissioning responsibility

NHS England has a duty to commission local healthcare services to meet the expected needs of the population of Somerset including the demands of the additional population of the new developments.

The NHS structure within England changed on the 1 April 2013 with the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). This change principally created NHS Commissioning Board, known as NHS England, replacing the Primary Care Commissioning function previously undertaken by Somerset Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset).

At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset.

Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group is developing a Primary Care Estates Strategy. This strategy will inform NHS England's and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) responses to Infrastructure requirements e.g. on new communities and new housing developments within Somerset.

In the interim, NHS England South, South West Team and Somerset CCG has considered all current work, and has used this to inform the comments on the proposed new neighbourhoods in Taunton. This sets out how access to GP Primary Care and Community services is ensured for residents of this new residential development in Taunton.

#### Nature of General Practice

Primary Care services account for around 90% of the public's contact with the NHS and can significantly improve the health of the local population, identifying and managing chronic disease and illness, and reduce reliance on hospital care. Primary Care needs to sit at the heart of natural communities, supported by community and social care services.

NHS England's and Somerset CCG vision is to make an increasing percentage of care available close to people's homes and to deliver more services in primary care and community settings, whilst reducing unnecessary reliance on hospital care. This will support the delivery of productivity and efficiency savings in secondary care, but will also make additional demands on primary care providers in terms of both direct service provision and in playing a more active role in managing local resources (for example developing and regularly reviewing care plans to reduce the risk of vulnerable people being admitted to hospital for preventable illness).

The General Practice Forward View published in April 2016, sets out a plan to stabilise and transform general practice. General practice in 2020 will not look the same. It will be able to work at scale making best use of premises and new technologies. This is because larger practices have more capacity to provide increased services and the necessary infrastructure to ensure that quality standards are being met and that clinical staff receive appropriate support and development.

In general larger practices are better able to provide a wider range of health services and support the systematic tracking and improving of the quality of care for patients with conditions such as asthma, diabetes and coronary heart disease, and for those with the most complex care needs in the community. By developing bigger practices, we can provide a wider range of services to patients and provide extended access to services in the evening and at weekends. Bigger practices are better able to work with partners to pursue areas of joint practice.

The development of new primary care estate must facilitate improvements in the range and quality of services offered in primary care. In particular it should enable GPs and their teams to play an even greater role in primary and secondary prevention of ill health, and to maintain and further improve the quality of services.

#### Healthcare facilities for new development

NHS General Practices are a publically funded Community Infrastructure. Although General Practices operate as individual businesses, they are contracted to the NHS and publically funded for the delivery of Primary Care Services. They are able to seek borrowing to fund new developments or extensions to their existing premises, and develop a business case to seek the revenue funding from NHS England towards the costs of their borrowing. NHS England and practices with an NHS contract adhere to NHS (General Medical Services – Premises Costs) Directions 2013 when they apply for and receive NHS funding for their premises.

Any extension or new development as a result of new housing will be needed on a gradual basis as houses are built and sold. This infrastructure will necessitate additional "void" space built and then utilised gradually during the life of the proposed development until completion.

Early NHS policy set a straightforward geographical criterion such that a GP is "within walking distance for mothers with prams". The NHS still recommends that patients register with their local GP. New residents are able to choose which GP practice to register with. The NHS uses pragmatic guidance that residents having access to a GP within 15 minute walk or public transport is an appropriate measure

of accessibility. At this stage of the development it is not possible to determine travel times for public transport or walking and NHS England South, South West would support the requirement for public transport and cycling/walking routes to be provided within the development area to provide that accessibility.

The Planning Authority has indicated that 1500 new houses in Staplegrove would result in 3,600 new residents in Staplegrove Taunton. This equates to approximately an additional 2.12 GPs to provide sufficient capacity for the new residents.

#### Capacity in neighbouring general practices

There are several practices in the area with 3 practices within 2km of the site. However, based on an analysis of the number of GPs at these practices and space available there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers of new patients expected.

For the purposes of overall planning, the policy was to define capacity in general practice as fewer than 1,700 patients per GP. This was the standard adopted by NHS Somerset in considering new developments, the equivalent of one extra GP for each additional 1,700 new residents. This is above the national average number of patients per practitioner which has fallen from 1,795 in 2000 to 1,567 in 2010. Therefore fewer GPs were commissioned in NHS Somerset than average areas. In the absence of national policy, NHS England, South, South West has used these guidelines to inform our recommendations for this document.

Patients can register with a GP practice of their choice, as long as they live within its catchment area and it is accepting new patients. GP practices now agree their practice boundaries with NHS England. Practices can apply to NHS England if they have insufficient capacity to care for further patients to close their patient list. Currently there are no practices in Somerset with a closed patient list.

An analysis of the capacity of neighbouring practices to determine the typical costs and sizes of primary healthcare facilities could incorporate the population projections for the area.

The Environment Statement published in March 2016 for Staplegrove East, Taunton sets out the GP Surgery Capacity. The table supplied has been supplemented with details of whole time equivalent GPs and shows the current provision is below the current demand.

To assess the infrastructure requirements a benchmarking exercise was undertaken to determine typical costs and sizes of primary healthcare facilities so a projection of future demands and need could be made. The current premises are the main limitation to accepting the additional new residents. They are currently struggling for the space needed to provide services to meet the NHS General Practice Forward View. The addition of the new residents in Taunton and specifically at Staplegrove will require additional capacity. The results of assessment indicate there is no local capacity that is accessible.



For the purposes of assessing whether there is adequate capacity, NHS England South, South West measures the GIA size of the premises against the Premises Guidance GIA rather than the number of GPs per patient.

NHS England South, South West recommends there is a requirement for creating this additional space within a Business case to redevelop one or more of the existing surgeries to include the space needed for the proposed the new population of 19,200 residents in Taunton. This is because the existing surgeries do not have sufficient capacity to be extended. NHS England and Somerset CCG are preparing a Local Estates Strategy, which will address the proposed population increases in Taunton and propose the preferred option to meet the need.

#### Early provision of healthcare facilities

NHS England South, South West Team would strongly endorse the need for healthcare facilities to be provided at the outset of the construction phase because it is important that there are healthcare facilities available before residents occupy their houses.

Given there is no capacity in neighbouring practices outlined earlier, NHS England would be unable to fulfil its statutory duties without further interim provision of local healthcare services during the development process.

NHS England would therefore support the potential for temporary provision and

co-location in appropriate locations until the completion of the final facilities –

provided that this was at no additional cost to NHS England and satisfied relevant CQC Regulations and appropriate standards for GP Practice premises.

NHS England believes that additional GP provision should be available for the new residents of Staplegrove Taunton at the outset of development. This would allow for incremental increase in services available in good time for when they will be needed. This would also allow sufficient time to plan and develop the permanent facility required on the completion of the proposed new neighbourhoods at Taunton.

#### Pharmaceutical services

The Local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, 2011 (PNA) provides an overview of pharmaceutical services provision. This document identified new housing developments with planning permission within Somerset. When the PNA was approved there were no gaps identified within current provision, and the national contract with each existing community pharmacy does not have a ceiling to contractor activity. Therefore the current level of contractors is adequate to meet the needs of the current population. A pharmaceutical services provider can apply for a new pharmacy contract when a gap is identified within the PNA.

Access to pharmaceutical services is anticipated to be available in (or adjacent to) areas where people access routine healthcare (GP surgeries) and/or major retail

areas. These are considerations in planning access to pharmaceutical services for each new community development, in addition to access to existing services.

#### Additional Pharmaceutical Services

Although there are adequate pharmaceutical services to meet the needs of the new populations, the pharmaceutical provision from nearby pharmacies may not be readily accessible to the new population. Nearby pharmacies are sited adjacent to and/or near other local primary care centres or in major retail areas, and they may require excessive travel.

Thus, securing accessible pharmaceutical services within the new community may require the provision of pharmaceutical premises within the Taunton New Neighbourhoods.

NHS England South, South West would, therefore support the provision of

accommodation within the retail centre or co-located with the GP practice(s) for

pharmaceutical services should be planned. In line with the commissioning guidance under which NHS England operates, Somerset Council will carry out full reviews of the PNA every three years. Any 'gaps' in pharmaceutical service provision for the new residents of Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods which are identified and published within the PNA will allow the consideration of a new pharmacy contract within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods.

#### Dental services

Since 2006, patients are not registered with dentists and a dentist is only responsible for a patient's care whilst they are in a course of treatment. Although many practices do have their 'regular' patients, the commissioning of dental services differs somewhat from that of general practice.

#### Additional Dental Services

Dental needs are calculated on Units of Dental Activity, which relate to calculating the amount of dental time needed to provide a range of treatments e.g. an examination = 1 unit and a complex treatment conducted over a number of weeks might equal e.g. 12 units of activity or standard appointment slots. The usual planning assumption is 1 dentist per 2,400 patients and so the Staplegrove Taunton new neighbourhood would equate to approximately an additional 1.5 dentists. Staplegrove - would require about 1.5 dentists to provide care for the new population. The majority of the General Dental Services contracts were within the range of 96%-100% contractual achievement. The practices in the immediate area

may not have capacity for growth.

Under the terms of the dental commissioning guidance NHS England would have to carry out a tender process before awarding any new General Dental Services contract within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhood or increasing any existing contract.

### Optometry services

As with dental services above, patients are not registered with an optometrist and an optometrist is only responsible for a patient's care in respect of assessing a patient's vision and eye health, issuing optical prescriptions and provision of optical vouchers for appliances such as spectacles and contact lenses. However, as with dental services, many optometrists do have their 'regular' patients.

NHS England has a responsibility to arrange for essential primary ophthalmic services i.e. NHS sight tests for those who are eligible. Furthermore, any suitable optometry provider is able to apply for a contract to provide NHS sight tests and there are no restrictions on the number of contracts that may be awarded or the number of sight tests they may carry out. The current national contract with each existing optometry provider does not have a ceiling to contractor activity.

### Additional Optometry Services

Although there may be adequate optometry services to meet the needs of the new population in the town centre, the optometry provision from nearby optometrists may not be readily accessible to the new population. Nearby optometrists are sited adjacent to and/or near other local primary care centres or in major retail areas, and they may require excessive travel.

Thus, securing accessible optometry services within the Staplegrove Taunton New Neighbourhoods may require the provision of optometry premises within the Neighbourhood Centre to improve accessibility to these services.

NHS England anticipates some optometrists may apply for a new contract(s) in these two developments as all current premises are located around the Town Centre of Taunton. Accommodation should be made available within the neighbourhood centre or within the GP practice(s) for optometry services.

### Outline of Healthcare Infrastructure Needs

The NHS England South South West Team and Somerset CCG requests contributions to enable the construction of extension space for 18.75% (1500 / 8000 dwellings) of 1083sqm facility for General Practice, and 1.5 dentists with retail space available for optometrist and pharmacy outlets.

- GP Services: contribution of an extension at the nearest surgery, Lyngford Park. The practice has developed plans for additional space at the surgery costed at £ 669,600 incl VAT and fees.
- a 1.5 dentist surgery/extension of 60m<sup>2</sup> of space (GIA) with a budget cost of £ 144,000 (excl. VAT) at £ 2400/m<sup>2</sup> = £ 172,800

This funding will be required at the outset of the development to ensure adequate capacity can be developed and planned to a total of £ 842,400 (incl VAT) excluding land.

*DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL -*

The Director of Public Health is keen to ensure that urban extensions to Taunton and other communities are designed and constructed so as to maximise public health gain for both the new and existing communities. As such it is vital that the principles of sustainability required by national planning guidance are applied in both letter and spirit, so that residents are enabled to live healthily and so that the healthier choices are the obvious choices. As this is only an outline application, we are necessarily constrained to comment on the matters under consideration now, but would encourage the developers to engage with the Public Health team at County Hall should the application be approved.

The main issues of concern to public health with this proposed development is the transport assessments and the implications for travel choices to and from the development to trip generators elsewhere in the town. There is a presumption that modal split of transport from this new development will be replicated from patterns elsewhere in the town for journeys to work, school etc, and only subsequently be reduced. This is not in accordance with national and local planning guidance which requires sustainable travel modes to be prioritised, nor with NICE Public Health guidance, endorsed by DfT, which also advises that walking and cycling should be prioritised (“Ensure the physical environment encourages people to be physically active. Implement changes where necessary. This includes prioritising the needs of pedestrians and cyclists over motorists when developing or redeveloping highways”). The Somerset County Council (SCC) Active Travel Strategy, Cycling strategy and Walking strategy set out local priorities.

The transport assessments (para 7.8.2) and modelling clearly identify that the Kingston Road gyratory will be overcapacity at peak periods, although this is not referred to at all in the conclusions. Local knowledge will confirm this is already the case at morning peak. The pedestrian and cycle audit claims that Greenway Road is suitable for cycling, but acknowledges other aspects of several routes are intimidating. Use of the Cycling Environment Assessment Tool on the routes “audited” by the developer would result in scores of 0 out of 5. Some parts of the off road routes audited are not identified as substandard, which again use of the CEAT would have established.

The developer appears not to have used a recognised objective audit tool, but rather has had an apparently experienced cyclist ride the routes and provide a qualitative assessment. It is now well established that planning for cycling should be based on what current non-cyclists who are potential cyclists would accept, not experienced road cyclists. Conversely, high quality cycling infrastructure is well liked and accepted by current cyclists, while facilitating new people to cycle of all age ranges and abilities.

In short, the transport infrastructure from the development to Taunton railway station is inadequate for cycling, meaning that very few new residents would be

willing to consider cycling to the station or on to other parts of the town. While cycling and walking infrastructure within the development could be of a good standard (to which I will return), without much improved infrastructure on the routes into the station and town centre, a useable network will not exist. It is vital that residents are enabled to choose to cycle if motor vehicle use is to be minimised, as walking to most trip generators will not be practicable from this development. The audit also fails to recognise a route south along Leslie Avenue, as an alternative to Greenway Road. See annotated video here. There is also no proposal to upgrade the substandard cycletrack to Gipsy Lane from Corkscrew Lane which provides access to the sports club and Taunton School, and which is much more direct than doing so by car from the development site.

Corkscrew Lane/Manor Road is currently a rat run between the A358 and North Taunton. Walking and cycling on this route, especially at peak periods, is hazardous and intimidating. Again this route would score 0/5 using the CEAT. The proposed spine road will provide an alternative west-east route. Arguably, the opening of the NIDR likewise will reduce congestion on Greenway Road removing justification for using Corkscrew Lane as a through route. We would advocate filtering Corkscrew Lane at Whitmore Lane to remove through motor traffic, while retaining through status for all other modes, when one or both these roads are open. This would provide a quiet east-west route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders as an alternative to Greenway Road and the Spine Road, with good connections to the lanes to the north for recreation. It would also protect Staplegrove village from through traffic, while retaining full access for residents and businesses.

### The Spine Road

The design of the spine road gives cause for concern with regard to its usability by cyclists. Shared use footways are at the very bottom of the list of acceptable ways to provide for cyclists, and placing a two-way shared use path on one side of the road limits its usability with limited crossing points. The suggestion from Highways to have the path switch sides at frontages would make the cycletrack unattractive to many cyclists as it would disrupt momentum. To propose such infrastructure on a greenfield site is unacceptable. We would refer the developer to [www.makingspaceforcycling.org/](http://www.makingspaceforcycling.org/) for best practice in this area and encourage adoption of these principles throughout the development. It should be noted that if high quality cycling infrastructure is provided, including at junctions, very few cyclists would be inclined to ride on the spine road itself. If a path is installed which requires cyclists to switch sides, give way at side roads and driveways, and otherwise disrupt direct journeys, many cyclists are likely to choose to use the carriageway instead. This in itself is likely to lead to annoyance to drivers who will complain that cyclists are not using the "perfectly good" cycletrack. This can be seen on the Silk Mills Road where provision was made on one side of the road only, requiring multiple signalled crossing stages at Bindon Road and Bishop's Hull for southbound cyclists. As a result many stay on road or cycle illegally on the footway on the eastern side, as it is far quicker to do so than negotiate the signalled crossings. This design error should not be repeated.

Furthermore, the proposed carriageway width of 6.75m, implies lane widths of 3.37m. The London Cycling Design Standards state: "3.4.11 The golden rule is to

avoid situations where motorised vehicles and cyclists are expected to move together through a width between 3.2m and 3.9m. Comfortable overtaking is possible above 3.9m. Below 3.2m it is clear to all parties that overtaking cannot be done safely. Between those widths, however, lies an area of uncertainty where road users might estimate they could overtake each other but where the clearance they would be able to give is inadequate, putting the more vulnerable road user at risk. This includes the typical lane width adopted in much UK practice of 3.65m. Use of this lane width should be avoided. 3.4.12 Where there is no cycle lane, the nearside lane width should therefore either be below 3.2m or at least 3.9m. Where there is a lane, the combined width of the cycle lane and adjacent (nearside) traffic lane should not be between 3.2m and 3.9m.”

If the spine road itself is to be used by cyclists then the carriageway width should be such as to avoid the hazardous width set out in the LCDS. As stated previously if high quality cycletracks are installed, for example hybrid tracks on either side of the carriageway with good junction treatments, then cyclists of all abilities will be inclined to use those facilities. The spine road cycletrack connections to the A358 may also present problems. The design shows multi-stage light controlled crossings, which may lead to significant delay for cyclists. Best practice is for cyclists to have single stage crossings, or again many will choose to stay on carriageway to avoid excessive delay through the junctions. Cycling infrastructure is often not used because it is very substandard. Any designs should be subjected to the CEAT process (or preferably a more rigorous tool such as TfL CLoS) to make sure they achieve at least 4/5. Best continental practice would enable cyclists and walkers to choose more direct routes than are available to drivers. Close Corkscrew Lane to through motor traffic, and upgrade the connecting routes into Taunton including the railway station.

#### Schools

There is no real consideration of travel to secondary school. The nearest school is Taunton Academy, but the road route along Hope Corner Lane narrows to single vehicle width. If there is no scope to provide a direct walking and cycling route from the Staplegrove East development site into the Academy and leisure centre site, then consideration should be given to filtering out motor vehicles from that section of Hope Corner Lane. This would make walking and cycling to that site from the new development much more direct than driving. This type of measure is important in encouraging more sustainable and healthier modes of travel over driving, which would benefit public health. The travel plan should seek to ensure a substantially higher proportion of school trips by modes other than private car.

#### Travel Plan Modal Split targets

At para 5.2.6 the document claims that the modal split targets aim to achieve the Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) aim of no more than 50% of trips by private car. However, the table separates out single occupancy car trips from those with passengers, and the modal split target is only for the former, and furthermore only achieves this target after 5 years. The target in the plan for private car travel is over 65%, well in excess of TDBC requirements.

An ambitious travel plan would be seeking to ensure that the 50% target applies to all car trips, and from very early in development. The opportunity to shift travel

behaviours occurs at major life changes such as moving house, or starting a new job or school. Thus travel choices made at first occupation are likely to become permanent. It is therefore important that the connecting routes off site are upgraded prior to first occupation, or at least very early in the development, to facilitate sustainable travel modes being adopted from first occupation.

### Conclusions

Unless this development and the East parcel are implemented on the basis of travel planning and implementation which is much more ambitious in terms of modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport, on and off the development site, it is likely that this will become a new car-dependent suburb of the town, with consequential impacts on public health arising from inadequate everyday physical activity in the population.

All car traffic from this development will funnel into the existing highway network. Minimising the scale of that traffic by prioritising all other modes will be essential to avoid worsening congestion at peak periods.

The proposed onsite cycling infrastructure does not meet best modern standards, and there are no proposals to address substandard connections off site to enable new residents to be and feel safe in undertaking utility cycling trips.

## Representations Received

At the time of the preparation of this report there have been 324 representations received from members of the public concerning the outline planning application for Staplegrove West (34/16/0007), up to 9th August 2017. Many of these are separate responses from the same source. 309 of these were objecting to the proposed development, there are 7 letters of support, 3 making entirely neutral comments and 5 specifying that they had no comments to make.

Of those objecting, a significant number of responses (213 representations) made reference to highways concerns and traffic impact. Of particular concern was the existing problems of congestion and 'rat running', and the perception that this proposal would make this worse. There was a lot of concern with the use of Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane as part of this proposal, particularly the proposed drop down link onto it in order to service some of the proposed housing. Reference is widely made to the need to have the link road completed either before development occurs or at a very early stage.

About a quarter of those who objected (73) made reference to existing flooding problems in the local area and sought reassurances that the new development would not increase the risk of flooding. Inadequate existing drainage was often cited as the reason behind existing difficulties.

The perceived lack of employment opportunities in the wider Taunton area was also a concern to many respondents. 53 made reference to a lack of employment opportunities in Taunton for the new households being created and that this would lead to commuting. Often associated with this was the view that most Taunton residents need access to the M5 for commuting and therefore further housing development would be more appropriately located at junction 25.

40 objectors referenced a lack of infrastructure and local services to support this number of new homes. In some cases the importance of infrastructure being delivered ahead of the proposed development was emphasised, particularly the proposed primary school, health services and the spine road.

Also of note is that 37 objectors made reference to the adverse impact on the landscape and/or the AONB; and 23 referenced the loss of prime agricultural land and impact on farming activity.

Themes and specific comments raised by those objecting include: -

### 1. Principle of development

- Staplegrove does not need any more houses.
- There is no justification for a housing development of this size.
- Current data shows that the Core Strategy predictions on the need for housing related to employment opportunities are hopelessly out of date and there are sound reasons for deferment on the grounds of prematurity until Taunton's needs can be re-assessed.
- The Council's Monitoring Report uses labour supply rather than labour demand. An increase in housing will boost labour supply figures, thus giving



the false impression that all is well with the Core Strategy employment prediction.

- This Government clearly stated that house building should only take place where there was a proven need for it and not on greenfield sites. There is no proven need in Taunton and won't be for some years

It will result in urban sprawl in a semi-rural location.

- The Staplegrove area is expensive to develop because of the need to put the power cables underground and provide a spine road, so this means the developer needs to fit as many properties as possible into the site to make it viable.
- The Core Strategy so urgently requires refreshing that it has ceased to be a sound document under which to operate.
- The SADMP, rather than assessing the viability and logic of these sites, is absorbed in considering the matter of due process.
- The number of proposed houses in the application is confusing as the initial total number of houses for both West and East was 500 homes. This application for some 713 dwellings with the east having 913 contravenes the Core Strategy which approved between 500 and 1500 houses.
- It is unwise to commit to further development on this scale until a full review has taken place.
- Fear that having obtained planning permission for 1,628 houses, they will build just some of these houses and then stop, in order to keep house prices up and not have to include all the promised infrastructure.
- This outline planning application is for the building of a new town surrounding and strangling Staplegrove village.
- There is no transport plan for Taunton.
- This site does not meet the criteria of being located on a main road into Taunton. The Kingston Road is not even a "B" road.
- The data used to determine the number of houses required in this area which was based on employment figures is out-dated and should be reviewed in the light of the current economic climate. A review of the Core Strategy is therefore imperative prior to this application being approved.
- The number of houses designated for this site together with a lack of infrastructure makes policy TAU2 unfit for purpose.
- A development of this complexity should be undertaken in a more appropriate geographic area near a road network that can accommodate the increased levels of traffic generated.
- The best site for new houses is east of the M5 towards Henlade. This would save all this congestion trying to get through Taunton.
- It would be better to consider a completely new village approach similar to what now exists at Cotford St.Luke.
- Brownfield sites for smaller developments would be far more suitable.
- There are numerous vacant properties that should be brought into use before a development of this size should be considered.

- The former market site (Firepool) is an eyesore and far more suitable for this kind of development.
- This is not a sustainable development.
- The SADMP should be permanently quashed.
- This application should be deferred on grounds on prematurity.
- The two applications must be considered together.
- It would appear that the spine road will be built in such a way to potentially open up land northeast of the site for further development.
- Now there are suggestions for a new M5 junction and a new building development for 3000 houses south of the motorway. This would obviate the need for these proposals for building on the agricultural, green fields of Staplegrove.

## **2. Infrastructure**

- This application is premature and the land should be retained for release for new housing in future years as the necessary infrastructure such as jobs, sustainable transport and schools are in place [CPRE].
- No development of this scale should be accepted without the landowners taking full financial responsibility for improving the total infrastructure needed to support such a large investment.
- It is indefensible to allow any developer to exceed the allocation of houses for Taunton at this time unless the required infrastructure is completed before construction of any new building.
- Support services will be overwhelmed as there are inadequate services on the North Side of town already.
- Leisure facilities in Taunton are inadequate. This will result in social unrest and antisocial behaviour.
- There is a current lack of play space.
- The “Central Park – multi use sports pitch” proposed is unsuitable for such use as it has a slope not ideal for any ball game sport and does not have good drainage.
- Who will manage the open spaces?
- Taunton does not have sufficient infrastructure to cater for the number of new inhabitants envisaged.
- The huge cost of undergrounding the electricity pylons and cables must not be a burden on the taxpayer.
- No school available on the proposed development and all schools in the area are full up.
- A school will be needed before any houses are built.
- The County will not be able to afford a new school.
- There will be no school if the other application (east) does not come forward.
- No provision for secondary schooling.
- There is no guarantee a new school and/or health centre will be built.
- Musgrove Park hospital will not cope with the new numbers of people.

- New residents will have problems finding a surgery and there are insufficient doctors to staff any new surgery.
- No mention of increasing services to Staplegrave – a village which is to grow.
- Overall number of new houses to be constructed for the whole urban extension should not be more than the 500 to 1500 range stipulated in the Council's published Core Strategy.
- It was never envisaged that this number of houses would be built and it will totally overwhelm the existing community.
- There is insufficient green space allowed for within this plan.
- Do not allow the green wedge to be reduced by encroachment into it e.g. by roads.
- The Council needs to ensure the green wedge is maintained as originally envisaged in the SADMP.
- Will Wessex Water be able to maintain supplies and water pressure during a prolonged dry summer?
- Power lines in the east should be buried underground as well.
- Who will be paying for the pylons to be moved as it will cost millions?
- If TDBC is really short of money why not put up the Council Tax instead and correct the infrastructure first?
- The allotments should be held in trust for future generations.

Garden Towns have always made the first priority to be infrastructure. The current proposals do not fit this.

### **3. Traffic congestion, impact on local road network and transport related issues**

- Concerns regarding general increase in traffic in the area.
- Traffic congestion in the area is currently at unsustainable levels on all roads in the area, but particularly on Manor Road, Corkscrew Lane and Kingston Road.
- Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane are already dangerous rat-runs totally unsuitable for anything other than local traffic.
- The Council has already given an undertaking not to support any access onto Corkscrew Lane.
- A drop down road onto Corkscrew Lane would not be necessary if the applicants adhered to the adopted SADMP principle of building starting in the west, only commencing in the east upon completion of the spine road. To ignore this is in direct conflict with Policy TAU2 and should not be permitted.
- More traffic will use Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road which has narrow stretches without pavements and so would be a danger to cyclists and pedestrians and would increase noise and air pollution.
- Corkscrew lane is inappropriate for construction traffic.
- How can 200 + extra households be expected to safely negotiate unimproved Corkscrew bends?
- The details and timeframe for delivery of making Corkscrew Lane an access for local traffic only should be part of this proposal and not a separate study.

- Make Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane a no-through Road and for residents only.
- Manor Rd/Corkscrew lane is not safe as a cycling or pedestrian route.
- Para. 2.2.19 of the SADMP states that “As a result of the SAC and traffic generation issues, any development would need to commence at the western end...and ...development at the eastern end would be subject to completion of the proposed distributor road.” This policy decision must be adhered to.
- Will lead to congestion in the town centre.
- The current junction 25 and link roads will not cope during peak hours.
- Need a new junction to serve the M5 and this development.
- Most occupants will drive to M5 to seek and get to work. This will result in unsustainable movement patterns.
- Traffic on the existing road network is often at a standstill during summer months. This will make it worse.
- Adverse impact of extra traffic on Kingston Road.
- North Taunton needs a new ring road.
- The spine road must extend eastwards beyond Kingston Road to become a ring road around Taunton at the outset of the development.
- The position of this roundabout on Kingston Road will be influenced by the proposed NODR and necessitate that the roundabout will move further northwards. To lose that opportunity now will relegate north Taunton to the disaster that exists south of the A38.
- Use of Whitmore Road as a ‘rat-run’ whilst works are taking place.
- Traffic should be restricted on Manor Road by blocking it in the middle to protect the health and safety of residents.
- Loss of trees and hedgerows for the new junction onto Kingston Road.
- The spine road should be built as a distributor road at 7.3m wide with bus lay-bys.
- *[Sustrans]* question the design of the spine road – whilst not doubting it meets SCC guidance, it is not in line with ‘best practice’. Lane widths 3.2 to 3.9 metres should be avoided.
- Spine road needs dedicated cycle lanes separate from the road and on both sides.
- The spine road should be completed before the development starts.
- The recent news of Taunton becoming a “Garden Town” and being given Government Funding with other opportunities for more funding, may be the answer for the Spine Road to be completed before any houses are built.
- £5m should be borrowed from the government by the developers to build the spine road first, thus promoting sustainability from the outset
- Even if the whole proposed spine road is built at first, the pressure on Taunton’s inadequate traffic systems will be severe.
- The spine road will never be built because there are too many people involved.
- The developer is an asset management firm which is designed to maximise returns and the Spine road is an extremely costly element of the build, so it is very unlikely ever to willingly build the road unless forced to.
- The spine road goes from nowhere to nowhere and will have no effect on the current traffic difficulties.

- The spine road should connect to the Silk Mills roundabout to prevent snarl-ups, particularly on A358.
- The spine road is not suitable as a potential future ring road.
- The spine road must not have individual accesses or other features that would detract from its primary function.
- The precise route of the spine road varies among the documents in application.
- The spine road has an awkward looking 'dog-leg' shape.
- The proposed egress of the spine road onto Staplegrove Road is unsuitable as it will create a row of some 4 sets of traffic lights within a distance of 500m.
- I consider signal controlled junctions much better than roundabouts in urban areas since this can provide bus priority and safe pedestrian and cycle access.
- The spine road and the blocking of other local roads will make travelling north/south and vice-versa impossible.
- There needs to be a pedestrian crossing over the spine road where it is proposed to cross Whitmore Lane.
- The proposal to have some houses' with direct frontage access onto a 30mph spine is in conflict with manual for Streets guidance. Cyclists and pedestrians alike will be placed at risk.
- The proposed spine road would be dangerous for road users and pedestrians at a speed limit of 30 mph without any calming traffic measures.
- Eastern end of spine road must be constructed before building commences to enable construction traffic to reach phase 1a and negate need for temporary access.
- The start of any development building must be from the east end connection of the spine road to Kingston Road.
- This is a commercial venture and so the developers could borrow the money to build the spine road first.
- Silk Mills roundabout should be enlarged to provide a fourth arm rather than having two signalised 'T' junctions.
- The proposed drop down road near Village World Furniture should not be allowed to happen. Even as "temporary" it will be long enough to be a traffic hazard.

The dropdown road would give the developers a convenient site access whilst delaying the cost of the spine road to a later date.

Commercial vehicles could not turn into the dropdown road without using the whole width of Corkscrew Lane thus causing a hazard and traffic hold ups.

- The passage of heavy agricultural equipment along Manor Road already causes problems.
- Additional traffic, particularly construction traffic, along Manor Road would cause regular immovable blockages.
- Given the narrowness of Manor Road, the lack of footpaths, its hairpin bends and existing volume of traffic, it is inconceivable that a new junction for construction traffic would be safe.
- The junction of the spine road with A358 is at variance with the map for this development in the Core Strategy Diagram.
- 4 sets of traffic lights in a 500 metre stretch of the A358 from the Cross keys roundabout, is too many.
- Station Road will become a car park.
- Traffic calming will slow down traffic leading to additional emissions and noise, having a deteriorating impact on those living nearby.
- Existing and future increased traffic problems and road safety in Hope Corner Lane.
- Need traffic calming along Hope Corner Lane.
- The proposed 'cul-de-sac' arrangement for Rectory Road cuts existing residents off from the countryside to the north.
- Do not need a roundabout where the spine road meets Kingston Road.
- There is no indication on the masterplan of how the spine road will achieve TDBC's aim of a future northern orbital route.
- We need a decent out of town distributor road.
- A northern orbital road must be completed ahead of any development at Staplegrove.
- The A358 is not adequate to support more traffic.
- The applicant and the council must prove the robustness of earlier traffic surveys.
- Staplegrove will be unable to cope with the heavy and large vehicles that are bound to go through the village while the work is in progress.
- Significant improvements would need to be made to the road layout to ensure that Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Road/Clifford Avenue don't just become even more of a rat run.
- The current proposal for the spine road is in direct conflict with the County's promotion of safe cycle ways.
- The proposal shows a cycle path on one side of the spine road only which will force cyclists to cross the spine road if travelling to or from its southern side.
- There does not appear to be any joined up thinking in regard to traffic, road use, bus service provision.
- Public transport must be made a priority, particularly linking the site to the train station.

- Access to Taunton academy is poor.
- There must be a footpath along Kingston Road from the proposed junction with the spine road.
- The development will generate more cyclists and there will not be sufficient cycle parking facilities.
- Need a cycle route running onto Gypsy Lane.
- Need more traffic free cycle routes as part of the proposal.
- Policy TAU2 (SADMP) demands “good cycle connections to existing cycle routes”  
The council must act now to ensure that a fit for purpose cycle network is in place in order to encourage more sustainable forms of transport.  
It is essential that the north-south cycling/walking link via the East Staplegrove extends at least as far as Nailsbourne (from where there are options to link through to Kingston). This would act as a traffic mitigation measure for the new development.
- Rectory Road is not suitable as a main cyclist route, due to the tight turn at the junction with Manor
- There are no guarantees that either CIL or other funds will be in place to fund junction improvement works.
- The plans do not show that it integrates into its surrounding in terms of connectivity.
- Very little detail has been given on how parking will work for the residents.
- There must be strict allocation of off-road parking for residents and visitors.
- Need good off-road parking facilities because parking on-street would be detrimental to appearance.
- It is not realistic to suppose that the operation of Travel Plans will encourage more sustainable modes of transport.
- There is no proposal for subsidised public transport to the development in the council’s IDP therefore there can be no guarantee that buses to serve the spine road will be provided
- TDBC need to work with SCC in order to develop a sustainable transport strategy before any new housing developments are allowed to proceed.
- Street lighting columns should not be higher than the nearest buildings and fitted with lanterns that restrict stray light pollution, to mitigate the intrusion of urban development into the countryside.
- Potential light pollution for existing properties along the Rectory Road Corridor.

#### **4. Flooding and drainage issues.**

- The flooding risk proposals seem to be based on out of date information, as weather patterns have significantly changed in the last few years.
- The models for attenuation areas are not adequate for the change in climate patterns for future years.
- Flooding will almost certainly ensue as it is already occurring at the junction of Corkscrew Lane and Whitmore Lane.
- Roads around Staplegrove flood on a regular basis.

- The existing road drains are inadequate to cope with the additional hard surface water run-off that this vast estate will generate.
- Due to the high cost of flood prevention, the easy way out will be to allow homes to flood.
- The proper provision and maintenance of SuDs are vital parts of developers' plans to attempt to alleviate the very serious problem of surface flooding. TDBC must not allow developers to wriggle out of this cost
- Attenuation ponds will not be able to cope. What happens when they get full and it continues raining.
- Will be a similar situation to that recently highlighted in Bideford, where the ponds created to take the flood water from the new housing didn't work.
  - If not properly maintained the 'SUDS' will become a problem.
  - Such a high density of houses in place of fields is a concern re increased flooding to neighbouring properties and beyond.
  - Who will maintain the attenuation ponds?
  - Drains cannot cope with the existing problems of overflow from the field into Rectory Road and opposite Hillhead Cottages and Sandene Close, so with new houses and concrete roads in place, flooding is inevitable.
    - Water drainage details are theoretically acceptable but relies upon regular maintenance. With cutbacks this might not happen.
  - It is not verified whether policy I4 of the SADMP can be met, regarding the need for adequate drainage with all new proposals.
  - Covering these fields with housing will only serve to increase the flow of water into the Tone and therefore out to the Somerset Levels.
  - Flood mitigation measures must be put in place before development commences.
  - The West application is remarkable for its lack of information about how surface water might be removed
  - Ponds and lakes are a major public health risk, particularly to children, as would cause infestation of mosquitoes and rats.
  - A summer flash flood will/cannot be totally captured and restrained.
  - While flooding on site may be prevented there may well be new problems downstream.
  - Flooding currently occurs because drains in the gutter often clog with leaves and the frequency of clearing drains is inadequate.
  - Cannot grant planning permission until proper provision for sewerage disposal has been made.

## **5. Landscape impact, loss of open countryside and agricultural land issues**

- Will compromise the beautiful view and area over the fields to the Quantocks.
- Staplegrove is on the edge of the countryside at the base of the Quantock Hills and should not be overwhelmed by this development.



- The large areas of woodland proposed to the north east of the site as a screen to the development should allow public footpath access to provide some degree of public gain for the loss of the open views across land.
- Loss of wonderful countryside and rural feel this side of Taunton.
- We need to ensure that we do not destroy the beauty of the landscape by overbuilding in an unsympathetic way.
- It is too close to the AONB and will have major adverse effects on its visual landscape and heritage values, resulting in a loss to its local and national value, integrity and distinctiveness.
- The Quantocks AONB with its SSSI is almost totally ignored.
- The development would clearly be visible from the Quantocks during the winter months.
- This proposal will diminish the green corridor between Taunton and Kingston-St.-Mary.
- Evidence for any reduction in the size of the 'Green Wedge' from that stipulated by the Council must be scientific and not economic.
- Loss of historic hedgerows.
- Concern about the loss of good agricultural land, known as Best & Most Versatile land. This development in Staplegrove (West) will lead to the loss of 55ha of agricultural land, 42ha of which are BMV land [CPRE].
- Taunton has a large number of brownfield areas which should be developed before this BMV land is released for housing
- This is prime agricultural land and should be used for food production, not concreted over.

There is no mitigation for the loss of class 2/3a agricultural land.

- Our local Farming and Agriculture Industry is progressively being eroded by peripheral 'greenfield' development. The many businesses that provide support services to the farming industry will also suffer.
- National Trust members are horrified that the Trust is giving up good farmland. Does HRH Prince Charles as president of the Trust know about this?
- What gives the present custodians of our countryside the right to cause damage in the proposed way by building houses 2½ storeys high which are completely out of keeping with local properties?
- The expansion of Staplegrove threatens both the identity of Kingston as a separate community and the quality of the environment that the AONB represents.

## **6. Employment issues.**

- Provision of new houses without additional employment in Taunton for the inhabitants.
- There is no work in Taunton so people will travel to other towns for employment.
- Taunton is not seen as a vibrant location for employment, with plenty of premises already available in areas such as the Crown Industrial Estate.

- It is not sustainable to build houses here when people will travel to Bristol and Exeter to work.
- Taunton desperately requires medium sized industries and a ring road around the town, not more houses.
- There must be plans for bringing some additional employers to the area otherwise it will end up as a very costly ghost town.
- The Authority's Monitoring Report, covering the year up to March 2015 has a serious error because it refers to labour demand and not labour supply. It gives the false impression that jobs are being created, thus justifying the scale of development currently occurring.

## **7. Wildlife and ecology**

- The ecological plan does not appear to be supported by substantive, written documentation. It is uncertain whether adequate provision has been made for some wildlife, e.g. bats flight path behind Lawn Road, as these are not detailed on the Ecological Mitigation Plan.
- Any lighting would have a detrimental impact on the bats and their ability to hunt.
- Impact on bats, their feeding routes and roosting sites.
- The mitigations provided for the bats is insufficient.
- The bank and hedgerow at the rear of Lawn Road should be retained.
- We require reassurance that hedging adjacent to Rectory Road, opposite Hillhead Cottages, will be retained as it is not clear from the planning application.
- The junction onto Kingston Road must be moved northwards to avoid the destruction of so many trees.
- Too many trees are proposed to be removed.
- The loss of trees and hedgerows will affect habitats and wildlife.
- There needs to be mitigation included in the building of the spine road to incorporate under road animal tunnels to prevent slaughter and to allow the movement of wildlife across the area.

There is very limited environmental assessment presented in the Planning Application.

The application does not detail all the wildlife known to be present in the fields within the proposed development.

- Any building in the area will have a huge detrimental impact on the local bat population.
- The application is suggesting the total destruction of huge areas of hedges some several hundred years old.
- The developers have not taken into account the huge amount and variety of the bird and wild life in the area.
- The removal of hedgerows are covered by The Hedgerows Regulation 1997. A hedgerow retention notice should be issued for all the hedgerows alongside Rectory road.
- No work should be done to the hedgerows between 1st March and 31st August in order to protect nesting birds, in line with the associated legislation.
- The proposal refers to the area around Hillhead Cottages as a 'site is of low ecological value'. This is completely untrue, as the area is home to a wide variety of wildlife, regularly seen by residents.
- There is no mention or mitigation against the effect on the House Martins in the planning application, which are a protected species given amber status due to declining numbers.
- There is also no mention in the planning application of the use of the fields to the front and rear of Hillhead Cottages by Fieldfares and Redwings (both given red status) for feeding and wintering.
- The woodland at The Grove is a valuable resource and should be enhanced to provide areas for the displaced wildlife and would be a welcome buffer to ensure that the impact to locals is minimised.
- The spine road will transect the green wedge making it difficult for wildlife to head south.

## **8. The urban environment and design**

- The height of the proposed houses should be kept in character with the existing properties.
- Density is a concern with 1500 plus new houses.
- Density is too high for a development on the far outskirts of town.
- Either this North Taunton community is one new stand-alone community focused on its central Green wedge or it is two separate suburban additions, respectively to two existing communities Staplegrove (West) and North Taunton/Pyrland-Rowbarton (East). It cannot be both.
- Will completely transform the character of Staplegrove and lead to the loss of its historic character.
- Staplegrove village must be protected.
- The village currently adjoins open countryside and this amenity will be lost.

- Building designs and positioning should be in keeping with the current Staplegrove village area.
- Where is a sense of community, a sense of place and identity in what is in effect a vast housing estate?
- The density, building heights at 2.5 storeys, and size of the buildings proposed are not in keeping with the local environment.  
The Garden Town bid requires a much higher urban residential density to actually render the town centre viable as a cultural centre.  
The out of scale proposals make a mockery of the Taunton Garden Town bid and should be rejected.

All existing houses adjoining the new development have a “green buffer” except for the rear of Hillhead Cottages and Lawn Road. This is totally unacceptable.

- Fear of overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy for existing residents.
- Hillhead Cottages will be overlooked and overshadowed causing a serious lack of privacy and negatively impact on ability and right to enjoyment of private properties.
- The overall lack of green space in the west is totally unacceptable.
- We need more green spaces and fewer houses.
- This 'city type' development will not blend with the rural aspect of the area.
- The homes in Corkscrew Lane/Clifford Ave/Whitmore Rd/Turner Rd/Lewis Rd etc. date back to the 1930s, and the new development would not be in keeping with this area.
- The junction of the new spine road onto Kingston Road is too close to the Listed Building at Okehills (impact).
- Need variations in colour [tiles, facings and doors] throughout the whole area to make the project more acceptable to the eye.
- Some dwellings especially those exceeding 2 storeys will affect the right of peaceful enjoyment of home, land and the privacy of existing residents.
- The proposal for a play area at the end of Rectory Road is ill conceived, not safe by design. It will be vulnerable to attracting an antisocial element.
- The current plan provides no direct access to public open green spaces from Hillhead Cottages. We will be at the centre of a large area of mainly housing, with little open space around us.
- We do not need any more allotments.

## **9. Housing**

- The need for more housing here has been calculated using a mathematical formula rather than market research to identify numbers of possible buyers.
- The latest housing figures from Somerset Intelligence do not support the housing predictions on which the SADMP is based.
- Need high rise apartments not low level estates, but not here.
- Taunton doesn't have that many homeless people and there are plenty of empty houses, so we do not need another 3000 new homes.

- There are hundreds of houses available to buy in Taunton, at all price levels, so why build more.
- The density of housing suggests minimal gardens.
- Residential properties should be made to have minimum garden lengths.
- Density of houses is too much of an 'urban' definition and should be reduced to integrate more with Staplegrove's character as a well-defined 'rural' village.
- The development does not specify how it meets the relevant Code for Sustainable Homes rendering the application contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP1b.
- The Council should deliver on its policy Core Strategy Policy CP4 to provide affordable housing, an appropriate proportion of which should be social rented. The policy figure of 25% affordable housing, as stipulated in both the Core Strategy and the SADMP, must be adhered to.  
A miserly 25% investment in so called 'affordable' homes defeats the object of providing cheaper houses for local people who desperately need them.  
The developers appear to be backing down on their commitment to the correct level of affordable housing, because of the costs involved in building in this area.  
Did they ever study the topography before drawing their plans?
- Need greater emphasis on housing for older and more vulnerable people. · There is a need for single storey houses for the over 55 year olds.
- Sale of houses on existing sites is very slow, so we don't need any more.
- We need clarity on the number of houses being built.
- The closure of Norton Manor Camp with its existing houses and those that will be proposed to replace much of the camp, must be taken into account.

## **10. Other comments**

- Huge impact on CO2 and other emissions.
- How are increased pollution levels to be managed.
- Risks to health of people living near the electro-magnetic fields of the pylons and 'grounding' the cables will not get rid of this.
- A CEMP must be produced at an early stage and with full consultation with local Parish Councils and residents alike.
- Any construction work should be restricted to between 9 and 5 on weekdays and Saturday mornings only.
- With an extended construction period of up to 10/12 years there will be a material impact on the quality of life for local residents.
- Concerns relating to noise and dust pollution during the course of development and from construction traffic.
- Will reduce values of existing properties in the area.
- No one will listen to our pleas for refusal.
- It would be against the overall Core Strategy for this large development to be allowed to go ahead except as a total package.

- Piecemeal development starting at the eastern, Kingston Road, end must not be allowed to proceed without having to contribute a full share towards infrastructure costs and without an overall master plan for delivery of the whole project being in place.
- The 'Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington future transport strategy, 2011 – 2026', states 500 houses as being the broad development area of Staplegrove.
- Vibration from the building of the spine road and its use in the future will damage the foundations of properties and create subsidence, particularly those with very shallow footings.
- This development is for profit and not the health and wellbeing of the residents.
- Impact of lighting, especially street lighting, on existing residents.
- Impact of increased noise levels, particularly from cars.
- In splitting and staggering their submissions, the developers are using a strategy to distract and confuse and, for some of their options, to arrive at a fait accompli.
- The developer appears to have completely ignored much of the feedback they have received from the residents and discussions at the planning meeting held by TDBC in December 2015.

These builders are land speculators first and housing developers second.

Their primary objective is to secure profits for their investors.

Corkscrew Lane is the outer limit of development of Taunton and it is very important that everything possible is done to see that this fringe-of-town rural aspect is preserved fully for both Clifford Avenue and Whitmore Road. The Staplegrove Urban Extension must be a very separate entity.

- Taunton Deane has an appalling record in the management of projects, such as the failure to secure the new market that went to Bridgwater, the debacle of the new inner relief road and the embarrassment of Firepool Lock.
- Do not trust Taunton Deane to properly represent the interests of existing residents.
- We cannot trust the planners to make credible decisions.
- Current residents of the area who are paying Officer's wages through their taxes deserve more consideration of their well-reasoned arguments.
- Worried about the anthrax being present on the fields as they have been used for cattle for hundreds of years.
- The Government's localism initiatives should mean that local communities have the final say. This clearly is not happening here.
- We do not need another pub. Too many are already closed.
- Some of the land adjoining Corkscrew Lane belongs to the National Trust. This land was gifted to them on the condition that it would not be sold for building on. We therefore believe that the N.T. has a moral and legal, duty not to sell this land.
- The National Trust have sold out to developers when they should be protecting land for the benefit of the nearby population and wildlife.
- Increasing tourism to this area would be a far better long term income stream.

- My right to the peaceful enjoyment of all my possessions including my home and garden will be seriously affected if this development is allowed to go ahead.
- It cannot be described as an “urban extension to Taunton” when it generally falls well to the other side of a whole sizeable village, making it more an “expansion of Staplegrove”.
- The field opposite Hillhead Cottage was used as a camp site for the English civil war. There is no mention of this in the application.
- The residents of Hillhead Cottages have not been consulted with directly by the developers.
- Insufficient time to comment on such a massive submission.
- Require clarification on whether any changes to Rectory Road are planned, and what effect this may have.
- How will local residents be shielded from the noise, dust, mud and general disruption caused by a development of this major size and scale?
- These plans are not a vision for the future but a vision for disaster.
- The plans and commentary supplied are neither detailed nor extensive enough to allow precise comment on the most significant issues.
- It is not called Taunton Road - it is Kingston Road.
- The largest area of open access space is situated on a steep hill making it inaccessible to the young and old.
- Compensation required for loss of views.
- Councillors are required to apply all policies and strategies including planning policies in accordance with their overall responsibilities as Trustees for the environmental, social and economic well-being of Taunton.

There have also been 15 representations received that did not object to the development - 7 of which openly supported the proposal, 5 of which had no comments to make, and 3 of which were entirely neutral. The main issues raised include:

- The U.K. has a desperate shortage of housing.
- This new development will provide badly-needed new homes to the area at a time of a national housing crisis. There are difficulties facing the young generation when it comes to finding and affording a new home. This opportunity cannot be missed.
- More affordable housing will help people in the area get on the housing ladder.
- There has been talk of building on this land for many years and it is now in the Core Strategy, so there can be little surprise that this area is now going to be developed given that housing is in such short supply.
- I agree with the Core Strategy that Staplegrove is a suitable location for such a development, preferable to multiple smaller developments which cannot supply the same level of facilities, or less accessible more rural areas.
- By providing valuable resources and homes for the area, this development can only promote and improve the area's economy and vibrancy.

- *[Headteacher – Taunton Academy]* - The increased catchment area and additional students the development would bring, would have a very positive impact on the academy, bringing increased funding and resourcing and result in improved service and offer.
- *[Headteacher – Taunton Academy]* - The spine road would improve the local road network and reduce school run traffic currently having to use Cork Screw Lane.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - This new development would bring space, resources and opportunities through CIL for new educational facilities which are much needed, particularly for early years providers.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - Significant attention has been given to ecology, wildlife and sustainability.
- *[Director, stepping Stones Play Group]* - We are impressed by the level of green space and play space being provided.
- Need to allow public access to the large areas of woodland proposed to the north-east of the site.
- No objection in principle to the expansion of this area of Taunton.
- A spine road in the plans submitted. It will provide a much needed relief route round this section of Taunton.
- A smaller development will not be able to support the necessary and desired infrastructure.
- If this scheme does not go through, how long will it be before the next developer comes forward, and can we be confident a better outcome can be achieved?

Full copies of all representations that have been received are available on the electronic planning file, which is available to view online.



## Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), saved policies of the Taunton Deane Local Plan (2004), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below. Policies from emerging plans are also listed as these are also a material consideration.

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework,  
SS6 - Staplegrove - Broad location for growth,  
TAU2 - Staplegrove,  
SD1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development,  
SP2 - Realising the vision for Taunton,  
SP4 - Realising the vision for rural areas,  
AFF HOUS - Affordable Housing 2014,  
CP4 - Housing,  
CP6 - Transport and accessibility,  
CP7 - Infrastructure,  
CP8 - Environment,  
CP5 - Inclusive communities,  
CP2 - Economy,  
D1 - Taunton's skyline,  
D2 - Approach routes to Taunton and Wellington,  
D9 - A Co-Ordinated Approach to Dev and Highway Plan,  
A2 - Travel Planning,  
A3 - Cycle network,  
D7 - Design quality,  
DM4 - Design,  
I1 - Powerlines,  
IM2 - Approach to viability,  
IM1 - Priorities for developer funding,  
AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,  
ROW - Rights of Way,

## Local finance considerations

### Community Infrastructure Levy

Drawing No 601 Rev J, Parameter Plan 2 (Density Plan) and the Council's CIL Viability Appraisal Residential Testing Assumptions, have been used to make the following CIL calculation:

713 houses – 534 market and 179 affordable (figure obtained from Affordable Housing Statement Feb 2016).

Assuming Social Housing Relief will be claimed for the affordable dwellings CIL has only been calculated for the market dwellings. The density Plan shows approximately 20% low density, 50% medium density and 30% high density housing.

Low Density = 30dph = 106 houses = 10,300 m<sup>2</sup> residential floorspace

Medium Density = 40dph = 267 houses = 24,463 m<sup>2</sup> residential floorspace

High Density = 50dph = 161 houses = 12,352 m<sup>2</sup> residential floorspace

Total = 47,115 m<sup>2</sup> residential floorspace

The application is for residential development in Taunton where the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is £70 per square metre. Based on current rates, the CIL receipt for this development is approximately £3,298,050.00. With index linking this increases to approximately £3,891,699.00 if approval is granted in 2016.

It is understood that there will not be any retail development on this site (use classes A1-A5 inclusive). So no allowance for this is made in the figures.

### New Homes Bonus

The development of this site would result in payment to the Council of the New Homes Bonus. The application states that it seeks permission for up to 713 new dwelling units, so the figures below have been based on 713. The eventual number of dwellings built could be less than this, meaning the amount of New Homes Bonus would be less as well. The figures below also assume 25% affordable housing, which has now been challenged with the viability process. So the figures given are very much a maximum.

#### *1 Year Payment*

Taunton Deane Borough	£ 769,376
Somerset County Council	£ 192,344

#### *6 Year Payment*

Taunton Deane Borough	£4,616,254
Somerset County Council	£1,154,063

## Determining issues and considerations

### Planning policy and the principle of development.

The application must be considered in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. At the point of the determination of this application the Development Plan comprises the Taunton Deane Local Plan 2004 (as retained), the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013). The NPPF is a significant material consideration and informs the weight that should be given to the Development Plan policies.

#### (a) National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on the 27th March 2012, confirming the Government's commitment to streamlining the planning system and encouraging growth. It introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system in terms of both plan making and decision taking to promote a positive approach towards planning and growth. The NPPF emphasises that 'planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.' In doing so the NPPF states that 'local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The relationship between decision-taking and plan-making should be seamless, translating plans into high quality development on the ground.'

The following chapters of the NPPF are relevant considerations for this application

- Chapter 1: Building a strong, competitive economy;
- Chapter 4: Promoting sustainable transport;
- Chapter 6: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes;
- Chapter 7: Requiring good design;
- Chapter 8: Promoting healthy communities;
- Chapter 9: Protecting Green Belt land;
- Chapter 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change;
- Chapter 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; and Chapter 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

More specifically, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance requires local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

The NPPF sets out three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by

identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF states (para. 52) that the provision of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages or towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.

The Government's support for good design is reiterated in paragraph 56 of the NPPF which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. The guidance states that new development should:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area.
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including public open space) and support local facilities and transport networks.
- Respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surrounds and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.
- Create safe and accessible environments.
- Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Paragraph 66 states that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the view of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design for the new development should be looked on more favourably.

Section 8 sets out some key objectives for facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. It states that decisions should aim to achieve places which promote:

- Opportunities for meeting between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active frontages.
- Safe and accessible environments.
- Safe and accessible developments containing clear and legible pedestrian routes which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

This current proposal needs to reflect all of these aims.

(b) The Government's Garden Village and Garden Towns Programme.

As part of its expansion of the existing Garden Towns programme, the Government is committed to support locally-led development and has announced funds to support delivery of these projects over the next two financial years. The

Government announced Taunton as one of three new garden towns on 3rd January 2017. The Council's successful 'expression of interest' bid identified that substantial growth will be delivered in Taunton through three new sustainable high quality communities at Monkton Heathfield/Nerrols, Comeytrove and Staplegrove. This was at the heart of its bid, identifying that the new garden communities will be a key driver and tool in the delivery of the transformational growth and vision for Taunton as a Garden Town, whilst retaining the highly valued county town 'quality of life'. As a result of this new status, revenue funding of £350,000 has been secured for the year 2016/17 and there is an expectation that a future award may be available for the year 2017/18 for which the Council has already made a request for funding.

(c) The Housing White Paper – 'Fixing our broken housing market' (February 2017)

The Government has issued a new Housing White Paper, because, in their view, the existing housing market is "broken". The aim is to make housing more affordable and give people the security they need to plan for the future. The Government see the starting point as being to build more homes because this will slow the rise in housing costs. The HWP is a consultation paper, so it's not policy, but it does give a clear indication of the Government's strategy for housing delivery. It concentrates on 4 main themes -

- The need for more land for homes where people want to live.
- Building homes faster once planning permissions are granted.
- Diversification of the housing market, opening it up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods.
- Take more steps to continue helping people now, by improving safeguards in the private rented sector, and doing more to prevent homelessness and to help households currently priced out of the market.

There are a number of key issues mooted in the White Paper which it is worth noting, because they are directly relevant to considerations of this current application.

- The new White Paper suggests revised wording for the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Whilst there is currently a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' the National Planning Policy Framework does not require an assessment of whether a proposal is sustainable before applying the presumption. Therefore, the Government are proposing to make it clear that the three dimensions (economics social and environmental) are part of the definition of sustainable development.
- There is a stronger expectation on avoiding low density and maximising use of land. Although the White Paper has shied away from prescribing densities, it is clear that there is an expectation that they will be greater than hitherto has been the norm.
- Recognition that there is a significant gap between planning permissions given and implementations.

- The need for at least 10% affordable housing units in any scheme ·  
No pre-conditions to be used unless the applicant has given written authority to use them
- Viability has not been addressed in the HWP, but maybe in the s106/CIL arrangements to be announced in the autumn statement.

(d) The Taunton Deane Borough Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2012 and sets out the vision for the Deane and the policies to meet that vision. In the context of this application it performs a number of roles. Firstly, it specifies the locations and quantity of growth to be accommodated within the Borough until the year 2028 and identifies the locations for developments and mixed-use urban extensions. Most crucially however, it identifies land at Staplegrove as a broad location for the delivery of between 500 and 1,500 new homes. This is policy SS 6. It identifies two development areas at Staplegrove separated by an extension to the Staplegrove green wedge to the north on either side of Mill Lease stream. The western area is stated as extending around the northern edge of Staplegrove village and the eastern area extending across to Kingston Road. The adopted policy explains that these two areas are proposed to be accessed by a new road from Staplegrove Road to Kingston Road, which would provide an alternative route to provide a reduction of through traffic on Manor Road and environmental enhancement of Staplegrove village conservation area. It also makes clear that a masterplan will be prepared to co-ordinate development to provide the necessary physical social and green infrastructure. A piecemeal approach to development in this area before a comprehensive masterplan has been agreed will not be permitted.

Policy SD1 of the Core Strategy is also relevant as it sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with Government policy contained within the NPPF. It states that planning applications which accord with the policies of the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The 'other' material considerations will be discussed in detail below, but it is considered that in general terms, and subject to the conditions and planning obligations suggested, they do not indicate other than approval. Policy SP1 (Sustainable Development Locations) of the Core Strategy follows on by identifying the sustainable development locations. It states that development will be focussed on the Taunton Urban Area, which needs to accommodate at least 13,000 new homes in the period up to 2028. This position is carried through in policy SP2 of the Core Strategy (Realising the vision for Taunton) where Staplegrove is identified as broad location for the development of between 500 and 1,500 dwellings.

Other policies, namely CP1 (Climate Change), CP4 (Housing), CP5 (Inclusive Communities), CP6 (Transport and accessibility), CP7 (Infrastructure) and CP8 (Environment) are relevant because they identify broad general requirements in relevant subject areas. The requirements of these policies are not generally site specific, but lay ground rules for acceptability of schemes. It is not considered that there are any requirements within any of these 6 policies which either are not or cannot be met by this proposal.

(e) Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP).

The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan [SADMP] was formally adopted in December 2016. Spatial policy TAU2 (Staplegrave) states that the area identified will deliver new sustainable neighbourhoods. It makes clear that "any planning application will need to be accompanied by a masterplan and phasing strategy with associated infrastructure, prepared by the developer in conjunction with the Borough Council and other stakeholders". This policy identifies a number of items which are listed as being essential for inclusion in the masterplan and the discussion below considers these requirements in turn and provides a view on the extent to which the application will satisfy these requirements:

· Phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes at an overall average net density of 35-40 dwellings per hectare:

The outline application seeks to deliver 1,628 dwellings. It would appear from the submission that the site will deliver appropriate densities across the site but this will need to be clarified in any Reserved Matters submission. The consideration should not be the actual number itself, but whether the amount of housing now proposed can fit into the site, taking on board the Government's proposal for higher densities as a requirement, and taking on board all of the other planning requirements.

· Affordable housing at 25% of total provision in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP4: Housing:

The applicants are seeking a reduction in the amount of affordable housing as part of a viability exercise which maintains that the amount of infrastructure the Council is seeking will make the site unviable. The position on the viability exercise is reported below. The precise mix and tenure will need to be agreed by Members and guaranteed through negotiations relating to the s106 obligation. Please also refer to comments submitted by the Housing Enabling Manager.

· A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road, comprising a convenience store (A1) of up to 500 m<sup>2</sup> (gross); 500 m<sup>2</sup> of other convenience retailing (A1), financial/professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3); at least one public house (A4), take-away (Class A5) and a community hall building (comprising of main hall, storage, kitchen, toilets) and associated parking, together with 0.25ha of land for a place of worship. Residential or office uses should be provided on upper floors;

Whilst the provision of these facilities is covered by the concurrent outline application, it is clear that it needs to serve both new communities. It is currently unclear, from the supporting documentation, whether the proposed local centre will meet the policy requirements for the mix of uses proposed in Policy TAU1. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the local centre provides what is envisaged in the policy. This will be covered by a condition which will ensure delivery of the local centre in accordance with a detailed design brief that will have been previously negotiated and agreed.

- A minimum of 2 hectares of serviced employment land comprising Class B1 b and c., Class B2 and Class B8 use; and other appropriate employment generating activities which would generate similar employment densities (excepting main town centre uses such as retail, leisure and offices.);

Whilst the outline application incorporates the provision of employment land, further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the employment land is incorporated as envisaged in Policy TAU2. This can however be achieved.

- A 2.5ha site for a 14-class, 2-form intake primary school with preschool facilities;

Officers have been working closely with Somerset County Council and the applicants to ensure a primary school is delivered on site. The Masterplan identifies a potential location for an area for a primary school site and although this is situated within the Staplegrove east site, the submitted concurrent application does make reference to this. The comments of the County Education Authority on this issue are given earlier in the report and discussed in the relevant section below.

- An extension of the existing Green Wedge on either side of Mill Lease Stream, between Corkscrew Lane and the open countryside north of the existing 132kV power lines;

Concerns have been raised that the extent of the new Green Wedge is smaller than that proposed in adopted policy TAU2. The extension proposed in the application is narrower east to west. This will be discussed in greater detail at the appropriate section below.

The applicant maintains that the proposals have always allowed for the provision of a Green Wedge as an important and integrated feature of the proposal and similarly, the representations they made through the SADMP drafting and examinations processes have maintained support for the principle of a Green Wedge. The area which is proposed as future Green Wedge within this application is currently rural in nature. It encompasses a shallow valley on either side of Mill Lease Stream, which meets Corkscrew Lane to the south. The applicants have proposed an alternative boundary which broadly follows the contours of the land. This alternative edge to the extension would offer the opportunity for new development arising from the allocation at the edges of the proposed urban extension to be orientated towards the Green Wedge resulting in a more active frontage and a sympathetic interface between the development and the adjoining open space.

The adopted Core Strategy sets out 7 key policy objectives for green wedges within the Taunton Dean Borough. These will be considered later on in this report, but basically, it is considered that the green wedge extension proposed in this (and the other concurrent application) will successfully meet and perform the 7 key policy objectives and the green wedge land area will, in combination with the existing, further enhance the overall policy objectives and functional quality of the Staplegrove Green Wedge.



In February 2015 Landscape Architects for the Staplegrove West application produced a document to advise on the landscape and visual aspects of the TDBC Green Wedge Assessment. It found that the assessment does not provide an evidence base for the rationale behind the extent and boundary of the proposed extension. The plan that forms part of Policy TAU2 within the SADMP shows the boundaries of the Council's proposed Green Wedge and is entitled '*Staplegrove Concept Plan*'. As such it is the applicant's belief that the exact size, shape and dimensions of the Green Wedge would be determined via future masterplanning associated with the submission of subsequent Reserved Matter submissions. The SADMP was adopted in 2016 with no further information on the justification of the boundary.

Officers believe that the current proposal still delivers the intention of the 'Green Wedge' and it is not considered that there is any reason to justify refusal on these grounds. On balance, and given that the proposal with this application is for a minimum size anyway, it is not considered by officers that such a small shortfall over the policy requirements could reasonably be considered to make the application non-compliant with the proposed policy.

- Multi-functional green space (including; allotments, children's play, playing fields, recreational areas, amenity space) in line with the relevant standards;

The submitted documents confirm that the development will include parks, spaces and green corridors to meet policy requirements. Much of this will be negotiated through the s106 legal agreement. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the green space requirements are delivered. This is achievable.

- Diversion of or placing underground the existing 132kV power lines between the A358 and Rectory Road.

This is covered in greater detail below in the section entitled 'viability'. For greater detail on this issue, Members are referred to this section. The following brief summary is made here.

Undergrounding of the power lines has always been a requirement of the Council, partly because the applicant had always assured the Council that this objective was achievable. The applicant has been in discussions with the owner of the lines (Western Power Distribution - WPD) for some time now. It is relatively recently that WPD have written to the Council, through their solicitors, to explain that they do not wish the power lines to be undergrounded. This issue is being negotiated by the applicant. However, whatever the outcome, this need not stop positive consideration of the outline consent. So long as agreement were to be reached before the appropriate reserved matters were considered, then this part of the policy requirement could still be satisfied. A lack of undergrounding the powerlines would not in any event mean that development was not physically possible. In that situation, development could still take place, but the number of houses would probably need to be reduced in order to leave a clear passage immediately beneath the lines. Development though would clearly be preferable

with the power lines undergrounded and so progress on the negotiations will be reported verbally to Members at the meeting.

In terms of the cost of any undergrounding, this is relevant because it affects the viability of the site. The applicant is of the opinion that the cost should be borne by the development itself, whereas officers are of the opinion that any such costs should be reflected in the land value being offered to the landowners. Officers have taken Counsels opinion on this point. The answer received is not entirely straightforward and so Members are again referred to the sections below which discuss all this in more detail.

· Strategic SUDS Infrastructure:

This has been done and is covered above by the comments from the relevant bodies. Conditions will be required to ensure delivery of the measures agreed.

· A new Northern Link Road extending from the western extent of the allocation on the A358 to Kingston Road, with provision for a future eastern extension around North Taunton;

The applicants have confirmed that this will be provided. A feasibility study has been submitted to the Highway Authority to show a suggested alignment and construction of such a road. This broadly accords with the alignment shown on the agreed masterplan. The Highways Authority has considered and accepted that it can be achieved to their standards. This however, is not a matter for confirmation with this application as the internal road layout of the proposals site will be a reserved matter. Members are simply asked to note at this stage that it can be achieved. The suggested alignment of the spine road in the eastern Staplegrove application together with the proposed internal layout of that site has been designed to allow for any possible plans to provide a future extension to the spine road in an easterly direction around the north east of Taunton. However, such an extension is not specifically part of this application.

· Closure of Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road, other than for local access:

The original submission showed two new permanent points of access onto/off Corkscrew Lane - one north of Clifford Avenue and the other just south of the proposed green wedge. These have now both been removed as permanent accesses through negotiations and exploration of alternative options.

However, the application for the western side seeks permission for a temporary access off Corkscrew lane to access the first phase of development. It would appear logical that housing development for this site should start in the west and then this could be accessed off the new junction proposed for the spine road with Staplegrove Road. However, this is not possible. The difficulty faced by the applicant in this issue is that the western part of the site has deliberately been planned for open space, water attenuation and landscaping because the site has a higher flood risk, it does require screening to mitigate the impact of the development, it is the most topographically challenging part of the site particularly in respect of Rag Hill. Rag Hill is designated as a Special Landscape feature and therefore requires sensitive handling free from unnecessary development, and the land has to accommodate the junction of the spine road with Staplegrove Road.

All this means that the housing development has to be away from the western end of the proposal. This means that a huge section of the spine road would have to be developed to access such a first phase of housing and given that the spine road and its associated infrastructure is a major financial investment and will be entirely privately funded, this would be uneconomic to achieve. The applicants maintain that the spine road cannot be built in advance of any homes, because profit from the homes is actually required to fund the road.

The applicants have looked at alternative options for this, but the temporary access onto Corkscrew Lane is stated as being the most viable option for them. The Borough Council and the County Highway Authority have consistently maintained that the spine road should be delivered within the first phase of development. This is also clearly something that residents and other stakeholders are keen to see achieved. The proposed spine road access junctions are a large proportion of the overall cost of the total spine road construction and access to any potential first phase of housing could not economically or reasonably be delivered until a proportion of the housing had been fully built out. To do so would not be viable. It is clear that any requirement to have the spine road completed before housing development commences would make the scheme uneconomic and unviable.

Other access points to the first phase of housing have been examined. A route could be delivered through Rectory Road but this would have a greater impact on the residents of Staplegrove Village. Whitmore Lane was another option but this road is unsuitable as it does not meet current highway standards and would in any event adversely impact upon nearby residential properties. Although the proposed first phase of housing development shares a frontage with the public highway at Rectory Road and at Whitmore Lane, neither are considered suitable locations for a temporary access road. Instead Corkscrew Lane was selected for the following reasons:

- There is an appropriate amount of site frontage with the public highway to deliver an access;
- There is adequate visibility in both directions at this location;
- A junction compliant with modern design standards is able to be delivered;
- It can provide access whilst maintaining a distance from Staplegrove Village and the existing housing east of Mill Lease Stream; and
- It would link well into existing cycle and pedestrian routes and will provide a suitable future pedestrian and cycle link into the proposed development.

So a temporary access is proposed off Corkscrew Lane in order to allow the western application to access land for housing development at an early stage (phase 1), which would not otherwise be available to them. It is proposed to access approximately 200 new dwellings in this way. The development and sale of these houses would then fund the costly infrastructure requirements of the spine road. The applicant has agreed that this temporary link will not at any time provide access for the Spine Road construction vehicles which will instead use the two new junctions at Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road.

The temporary nature of the access road will mean that any impact on the local highway network will be for a limited time period. Once the Spine Road is completed, the temporary access road would be closed to all vehicular traffic and would be down-graded to a pedestrian/cycle link only instead. This will need to be captured in the legal agreement (s106). It is proposed that the temporary access road will be closed to vehicular traffic at the earlier of the following:

- The Spine Road being completed and open to traffic; or
- Five years from when the temporary access road is constructed and first used.

Allowing the temporary access to be provided in this location will minimise any interaction between the phase 1 housing development and the construction of the spine road and as a result speeds up the delivery of the Spine Road. This is due to the traffic associated with Phase 1 not having to use the Spine Road for access. The completion of the spine road will reduce the vehicle trips on Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road by 500 trips in the am and 400 in the pm peak.

The temporary nature of the access road will mean that any impact on the local highway network will be for a limited time period. The proposed link road would be down-graded to a pedestrian/cycle link once the spine road is completed and this will need to be captured in the legal agreement (s106). The completion of the spine road will reduce the vehicle trips on Corkscrew Lane and Manor Road by 500 trips in the am and 400 in the pm peak. It should be noted that the Highway Authority has no objection in principle with this connection (for the temporary period as proposed).

The proposed use of Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane as a means of providing access to the new development until the proposed Spine Road had been constructed was one particular issue the which the Council (Executive) did not feel able to support when it considered the masterplan. However, given the high cost of the provision of the spine road, the need to fund this with some income from house sales, the fact that the western application has to start in the east (because its western portion has open space, flood attenuation and Rag Hill), and the temporary nature of the proposal which can be guaranteed through the legal agreement, officers do not consider this unreasonable. It is also important to note that the Highway Authority at the County are supporting this approach. This approach will need to be mitigated with traffic management measures along Manor Road which will be guaranteed through the s106, and through a condition requiring the provision of a Construction Environmental Management Plan. If all this is achieved, then it is considered that the terms of this policy requirement will not be infringed.

It should be noted here that if the Council is successful with its current bids for funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (see relevant later section of this report), then it is intended that the money would be used to forward fund the spine road and the proposed temporary access off Corkscrew Lane would not therefore be required.

- Design and travel planning measures to achieve a significant shift to more sustainable forms of transport including, within residential areas, a maximum 20mph design speed and shared surface streets;

This will be referred to in the Legal Agreement under s106 and via conditions, but is basically a matter that will be sorted out after any outline consent has been granted.

- Provision of connected streets designed to be suitable for cycling and walking and, where appropriate, additional measures to ensure that cycling and walking are safe and attractive means of transport;

The Masterplan and the submitted documentation outlines design principles in line with the policy requirement. This will be a matter for consideration at the reserved matters stage, but it is noted that there are no objections to the proposal at this stage from either the Highway Authority (subject to conditions and further negotiations) or the County Rights of Way Officer.

- Good cycle connections to existing cycle routes, in particular towards the town centre via Gipsy Lane, Clifford Avenue/The Uppers, Bindon Road, and along the route of the Northern Distributor Road;

This is more relevant to the Staplegrove east application, but negotiations are in hand to try and ensure adequate provision that will be guaranteed through any legal agreement.

- Provision of direct and safe walking routes to access existing bus services on the A358 and Kingston Road, and allowance for future provision of new local bus services within the development;

The Masterplan and the submitted documentation outlines design principles in line with the policy requirement. This is being pursued through the s106 negotiations and so will be guaranteed as a matter for consideration at the reserved matters stage. It is currently noted that there are no objections to the proposal at this stage from either the Highway Authority (subject to conditions and further negotiations) or the County Rights of Way Officer.

- Sensitive incorporation of the route of the West Deane Way;

This is of particular concern specifically for this Staplegrove west application (rather than this east application). The principles required here will need to form part of a design and placemaking strategy and as such will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage. Appropriate conditions have been proposed to guarantee consideration of this requirement and it is sufficient to note at this stage that this will need to be achieved at the appropriate time.

- Protection of the Rag Hill special landscape feature by not allowing built development to break the skyline;

This is of particular concern specifically for this Staplegrove west application (rather than this east application). The principles required here will need to form part of a design and placemaking strategy and as such will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage. Appropriate conditions have been proposed to

guarantee consideration of this requirement and it is sufficient to note at this stage that this will need to be achieved at the appropriate time.

· Off-site woodland planting in accordance with the Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment to mitigate the impact of the development on Lesser Horseshoe bats. Timelines for delivery of the offsite woodland are to be agreed between the Council, County Ecologist and site promoters and should be delivered at the earliest opportunity;

Proposals to guarantee this have been submitted by the applicants. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives.

The County Ecologist has prepared two separate 'Tests of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), one for each of the Staplegrove applications, under a Service Level Agreement with TDBC. These were then sent to Natural England for their comments. The mitigation for both applications has been dealt with as a cohesive whole and no issues have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements.

Following the new information provided under a Regulation 22 submission in December 2016, the County Ecologist commented further that he had reviewed the updated ecology material and considered that no update to the Habitats Regulations Assessment was needed.

This was all sent to Natural England who has agreed with the conclusions in the HRA and supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. Subject to these conditions being met, it is considered that this element of policy requirement will have been satisfied.

· Landscape buffers and planting belts, including a belt along the outer edges of the development areas, facing bat activity from Hestercombe SAC;

This is more of a concern for the Staplegrove east application. However, between them, the two applications clearly demonstrate that the landscaping buffers and planting belts required can be provided. The need for suitable trees within the housing areas will be covered by detailed landscaping plans that will be required for the reserved matters stage. This is all discussed in the landscaping section of this report. In terms of the needs to protect existing bat activity, the comments given above (regarding off-site planting) also apply here.

- Provision of public access to enhanced parkland south of the former Pyrland Hall;  
This is entirely a matter for the Staplegrove east application to deal with. It will be a matter that will need to be negotiated and ensured at the Reserved matters stage.
- Detailed flood risk assessment will need to be undertaken and identify the strategic SUDs infrastructure required;  
This has been undertaken and been the subject of negotiations. The Environment Agency have now withdrawn an initial objection to the proposals. The Lead Local Flood Authority (at Somerset County Council) now has no objection subject to standard drainage conditions. These have been incorporated into the recommendation.
- A Heritage Conservation Strategy. This strategy will identify heritage assets potentially susceptible to impact (including Grade II\* listed Yarde Farnhouse, Grade II\* listed Pyrland Hall, Grade II listed Okehills and the Staplegrove Conservation Area), their significance, settings, and where appropriate, proposed mitigation measures sufficient to avoid or minimise harm.  
None of the aforementioned Listed Buildings are within the western application site boundary. In fact there are no listed buildings in this site boundary. Staplegrove Lodge (grade II, L.B.) is on the western edge, but just outside. Heritage England are not now objecting, but do recommend a further review at the Reserved Matters stages. The Conservation officer has confirmed that in no case is the harm greater than 'less than substantial' and this can be reduced by mitigation measures [that would be considered at the Reserved Matters stages] and could be weighed against public benefits as described in para 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council produced a 'Statement of Common Ground on the Historic Environment' with Historic England and the two Site Promoters (west and east). This was compiled in November 2015 as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan DPD examination. The submission is broadly in alignment with this 'Statement'. This policy requirement is therefore considered to be met.
- Detailed design codes prepared for individual areas within the development. This will need to be addressed in any Reserved Matters application and is covered at this stage by suitably worded conditions.

It can be seen from the above list, that the proposed application either meets all of the criteria required by policy TAU2 of the SADMP or is capable of meeting them. Given that the document is now adopted, maximum weight should be applied to this policies and its site allocation in the plan.

(f) The Masterplan/masterplanning issues.

It is worth noting at this stage that The Council (Full Council) resolved on 15th December 2015 that the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief be agreed as the basis for development, with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the junction

between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; and the alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application.

It was also agreed that officers should write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-

- (i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;
- (ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists; (iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;
- (iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;
- (v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development;
- (vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
- (vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;
- (viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;
- (ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and
- (x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

The Council did write to the Site Promoters and made these points clear. The current submission is in accordance with these points in so far as they are relevant to this outline application with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale being Reserved Matters.

There was clearly a significant process leading up to the Council's decision to agree the masterplan and therefore it is considered that the applicant has undertaken due and appropriate process in order to discharge the requirements of masterplanning the proposal. Officers are of the opinion that the outline planning application submission together with the agreed masterplan provides an appropriate level of detail and information to enable the development to be properly considered in the light of relevant policies and guidance, site constraints and opportunities; and also ensures that a high quality development of the allocated site could be delivered through incorporation of relevant parts of the application documents into an outline planning



permission. As such, it is considered that the submitted application proposal and material meets the following objectives:

- Delivery of the project vision;
- Compliance with Core Strategy policies in term of use, general quantum of development, key characteristics and design, including sustainable design;
- Delivery of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to development, particularly in relation to phasing and delivery of infrastructure; and
- Inclusion of a suite of plans and documents that provide an appropriate level of detail and information to enable the development to be properly considered in the light of relevant policies and guidance, site constraints and opportunities

Officers are now satisfied that there are no significant masterplanning issues that have not or will not be appropriately addressed. There will be a need for some three dimensional testing and fixing of masterplan components prior to the submission of Reserved Matters applications, which should then be incorporated into framework plans and site wide design guide and appearance palettes. These can be delivered through appropriate conditions.

(g) Neighbourhood Plans.

There are no adopted, draft or proposed Neighbourhood Plans whose area of jurisdiction covers this development proposal site, or that sit in close proximity to its boundary.

(h) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) March 2017

The 2017 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), has identified the urban extension at Staplegrove west as being capable of delivering 713 new homes (current application site) and 915 new homes on the eastern site, making a total of 1628 being capable of being delivered during the plan period. However, it is important to note that these figures are based on the two currently submitted planning applications and are not based on the policy requirements given in the Core Strategy and the SADMP. They therefore relate to the 5 year housing land supply calculations only and do not supersede the policy requirement. Whether or not the site can actually take the number referred to in the SHLAA will be determined through the consideration of the planning application with reference to the adopted policy. The figures given in the SHLAA are important in as much as they form part of the calculations that demonstrate a five year supply of housing sites within the Council's area. It is clear that the north Taunton Urban Extension is an important and integral part of the Council's housing supply figures and without all of the proposed new homes coming forward at the application site, the Council could be at risk of falling short of delivering the minimum target of 17,000 new homes before 2028.

(i) Principle of the development.

The above discussions of the relevant planning policy documents shows that the principle of the development of a mixed use urban extension in the form of 'new sustainable neighbourhoods' with a phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes is a long standing commitment by the Council and has been established through adopted planning policy, particularly by Core Strategy, policy SS 6 and SADMP, policy TAU2. The location for the application has been endorsed, based on a number of assessments, by the Taunton Strategic Urban Extensions Study. The application site

now forms part of the location of the urban extension identified in the Adopted Site Allocation and Development Management Plan, which now carries maximum weight as a planning consideration due to it having been adopted only last December (2016). Furthermore, the proposed development would achieve the aspiration of adopted Core Strategy policy SS 6 for a comprehensive masterplanned development which delivers the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure and avoids piecemeal development. It also meets the requirements of policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, which proposes 'new sustainable neighbourhoods at Staplegrave', with a phased delivery of around 1,500 new homes. The principle of development of the site for a mixed use urban extension must therefore be considered to be in accordance with adopted policy and in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, "***should be approved without delay***".

### **Community Engagement**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. In this instance, the applicants have undertaken a consultation process with local residents, the Local Planning Authority and a range of local stakeholders including Parish Councils, the Local Education Authority, Chambers of Trade and local employers and community organisations. The applicant has undertaken this consultation process over several years and has included formal public consultation exercises including exhibitions and written feedback, ongoing liaison and meetings with Council officers, statutory consultees and other local stakeholders, project website, newsletters delivered to the local community and advertising in the local press.

It is apparent that the proposals for Staplegrave West have been informed by a lengthy and detailed period of both public and stakeholder consultation underpinned by engagement with the community, the Local Planning Authority and other stakeholders. A number of meetings and events have taken place during the pre-application period and the feedback has been used to make improvements to the masterplan. It is therefore considered that the applicant has discharged their responsibility in respect of community involvement and engagement.

### **Highways and transportation (incl. access, public transport and travel plan)**

#### **(a) Site analysis and the existing situation.**

The A358 Staplegrave Road runs approximately in an east to west direction along the western and southern boundary of the application site. This road has connections with the A3065 Silk Mills Lane via a roundabout junction (the 'Silk Mills Roundabout') and the B3227 via the 'Cross Keys Roundabout'. The A358

Staplegrave Road continues to the north west of Taunton providing a route towards Minehead and the Bristol Channel coastline. To the east of the application site, the A358 Staplegrave Road connects with Manor Road via a signalised junction, provides routes into the centre of Taunton (including the railway station) and then on to Junction 25 of the M5. There is an existing lane into the application site located off the A358 some 40m east of the Silk Mills Roundabout. This access is a derestricted single lane

of about 3m width currently serving a working farm, some dwellings and Stillman's Butchers (Head Office).

Manor Road connects with the A358 Staplegrove Road via a signalised junction. It provides frontage access to a number of dwellings as well as a route to Staplegrove Sports Club, Village World (furniture showroom) and a through-route to Whitmore Lane and Kingston Road to the east.

Two Public Rights of Way (PROWs) traverse the site north to south. One is located to the west of Rectory Road. This is the 'West Deane Way' and the other is located between Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane. Both PROWs connect into Manor Road to the south and provide routes northwards from the site into the countryside. The West Deane Way is a 50 mile circular walk through the Vale of Taunton Deane passing through settlements including Kingston St Mary, Milverton and Wiveliscombe among others. Three PROWs extend southwards from the A358 to provide connections towards Bindon Road and therefore provide alternative routes to the town centre.

The National Cycle Network Route 3 passes to the south of the site. This is accessible via a shared pedestrian/cycle footpath along the A3065 which runs south from the site.

The closest bus stop to the site is the 'Taunton, Cross Keys' stop located between the A358 / A3065 and A358 / B3227 roundabouts to the south west of the site. Two bus services (25 and 28) currently operate from the Cross Keys stop, both of which serve Taunton Town Centre. These are operated by First. In addition a school service, no. (Bishops Lydeard to Bridgwater College) is operated by Hatch Green Coaches from the Cross Keys stop. Taunton Railway Station is situated circa 2.5km to the south east of the site and is accessible from the site by the 25 and 28 bus services.

(b) The points of entry into the new community.

The main vehicular accesses into the site are not reserved matters and will therefore obtain full planning permission with any approval granted to this outline application. This has been done in this way because it is a fundamental consideration with the proposal and will enable early access onto the site so that the phases of development can be planned and begun. This section will consider the planning merits of the proposed new points of entry into the urban extension. The technical highway considerations of these junctions will be considered at the appropriate point below.

Vehicular access is proposed into the new community at 2 key points across the development. Firstly, a new access is proposed off the existing A358 Staplegrove Road. This involves converting the existing Silk Mills roundabout to a signalised 'T' junction and linking it to a new signalised 'T' junction slightly further to the east on Staplegrove Road. This was chosen as the preferred access option because the junction arrangement was found to provide the most capacity resolving existing congestion issues at the Silk Mills Roundabout junction whilst providing safe crossing facilities for pedestrians. Other options were considered, namely

- The existing Silk Mills Roundabout being redesigned and increased in size to accommodate more traffic with a proposed signalised access junction to the site east of the abattoir; and
- The addition of a fourth arm onto the Silk Mills Roundabout which would provide direct access into the site. This option has since been discounted due to constraints to the south of the roundabout and the fact that this option would require the provision of a large roundabout that would be disproportionate in scale to the majority of other junctions in Taunton.

Secondly, a new access is proposed in the east of the new community where the proposed spine road meets Kingston Road. As originally submitted, this was modelled to be a four armed roundabout. This was proposed as a result of pre-application discussions between the applicants for both Staplegrove proposals (West and East) and the County Highway Authority. However, in its submitted form, officers had reservations about the size of the junction and its perceived land take. Concerns were simultaneously expressed by the Quantocks AONB Service in terms of its size, visibility from the AONB and its general impact upon this important gateway to the AONB. As a result of this negotiations took place to explore whether any different forms of junction could alleviate or mitigate the perceived environmental concerns with the roundabout. The only alternative acceptable to the Highway Authority was a traditional 4 armed junction in the form of crossroads. This would need to be signalised due to the modelled traffic flows and degree of conflicting movements that would arise. It transpired that a signalised cross-road junction had a very similar land take to that of the originally proposed roundabout, primarily because of the holding lanes that would be required and the amount of land that would need to be provided as visibility splays. Therefore, there is little to choose between the two in environmental impact terms. Officers formed the opinion that the signalised crossroads option would be preferable because this was in keeping with the other junctions out of Taunton along the Kingston Road/Taunton Road highway, and indeed other junctions on other routes into and out of Taunton.

Concern has been expressed that the new junction will sit too close to Okehills (a grade II listed building) and will result in the loss of too many existing trees many of which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. The reason for the submitted position of this junction is as follows. Members will recall from their consideration of the Masterplan towards the end of 2015 that they wanted the access into the urban extension off Kingston Road/Taunton Road to be further south than originally indicated by the Site Promoters. This was primarily to reduce its impact upon the AONB. The current position was chosen because it was considered to have least (albeit some) environmental impact.

There are three main reasons for the now proposed location of the junction with Kingston Road. Firstly, there is a known population of Dormice that are present along the edges of Kingston Road and its adjoining hedgerows. If the junction was to be located further north, then the population of Dormice left in the hedgerows to the South would become isolated and die due to the lack of food source. Members will be aware that dormice are an internationally protected species. The President of the mammals Society, the County Ecologist (acting under agreement for the Borough Council) and the applicants own ecologist have been out to site and agreed a strategy for the

Dormice. As submitted, there are suitable hedgerow runs to allow the dormice to move away from the Kingston Road edges of their own accord, so they will not have to be translocated as part of this element of the proposal. It is true that the adopted SADMP policy TAU2 stipulates (bullet point 3) that the proposal should include – “A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road” and the masterplan agreed by Full Council (December 2015) does show a site to the north-west of the intersection. However, when the reserved matters are considered, it will be possible to design a scheme that retained a ‘favourable conservation status’ for the dormice, by means of a small green wedge or parcel of land free from development. The local centre is to be accessed internally from the new community and not directly off Kingston Road, so there is no need for development to encroach into any dormice zone. So, it cannot be concluded that the Local Centre will be the cause of them having to move. The current applications are in outline only and the location, extent, form and design of the Local Centre is not being considered at this stage. Most crucially, the position of the Local Centre is not being set by this particular application in any event. So it could actually be anywhere, in any form. This will be a Reserved Matter.

Secondly, Officers of both the Borough Council and the AONB Service wish to keep any lit junction arrangements as far South as possible so that the impact of the views from the Quantock Hills are kept to a minimum and so that any potential light pollution is minimised.

Thirdly, it was felt important to minimise the visual impact on the views from Pyrland Hall (a grade II\* listed building). Locating a junction further north, such as opposite the playing pitches would substantially harm and impact on the views.

The extent to which trees will be lost with the junction in this location is one which the Council’s Tree Officer has agonised about. However, his conclusion is that, although the loss of any tree is regrettable, with suitable replacement planting and strong landscaping schemes, he understands the importance of the provision of the urban extension and does not wish to object to this junction as now proposed.

The County Highway Authority have examined and tested the proposed signalised junction and are satisfied that it works with minimal interference to the free flow of traffic and is a sensible solution to the need for a junction at this point.

Therefore, for all of these reasons, Members are asked to approve the provision of a signalised junction at the point now indicated with the submission.

(c) The Environmental Statement - Transport and access.

The Transport and Access chapter of the Environmental Statement contains an assessment of the likely significant effects of the proposed development in relation to traffic and access. The Transport and Access chapter is supported by a Transportation Assessment and Travel Plan. As part of the assessment, future forecasted traffic levels have been considered, including flows from cumulative developments. A package of measures has been proposed to mitigate any adverse effects including Travel Plans, new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes and improvements to bus stops. Both Highways England and the Highway Authority have

reviewed the original and revised submissions and considered the overall benefits and dis-benefits of this proposal. On balance they recommend that there is no highway reason why permission could not be granted, Highways England have recommended 'no objection' and the County Highway Authority is recommending no objection, subject to the S106 obligations and suggested conditions being provided.

#### (d) Amendments to the Transport proposals

Following lengthy negotiations and discussions about the impact of the transport proposals, changes were made to the transport section of the Environmental Statement. These changes reflect the considered opinions of officers at both the County Highway Authority and the Borough Council. The changes made to the proposals (from that originally submitted) can be summarised as follows -

- The Kingston Road roundabout, which connected the Spine Road to Taunton Road has now been removed and replaced with a signalised junction (change affecting both Staplegrove West and East applications).
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, north of Clifford Avenue, has now been removed and replaced with a cycle only access (change affecting Staplegrove East application).
- The addition of a vehicular connection road from the Spine Road to a proposed residential parcel of land north of Corkscrew Lane. The gap through the existing belt of trees between the Mill Lease Stream and Okehills is proposed to be increased in width to add vehicular means of access (to the previously proposed cycle footway,) from the Spine Road to the north into the southern area of proposed development adjacent to Corkscrew Lane and Okehills (change affecting Staplegrove East application).
- The permanent vehicular access point onto Corkscrew Lane, south of the green wedge, has now been removed.

These changes are considered to improve the operation of the proposals in highways terms considerably and they also reflect concerns expressed by local residents. The following analysis of the transport proposals is therefore based on these amended highways proposals.

#### (e) Traffic Impact

From the outset, it must be noted that it is the view of the County Highway Authority (at Somerset County Council) that there is no objection to this development proposal subject to certain highway mitigation being secured through the s106 process. These measures will be considered below. The Highway Authority is clear that if any of these measures are not able to be secured, the impact on the Highway Network is likely to be severe as described in the NPPF and would be recommended for refusal. However, with these measures, the Highway Authority does not object. There are also a number of points with regard to detail that will require addressing at the reserved matters stage (if the outline consent is granted) but none of these would prevent the outline proposals from being positively considered in highways terms. In general, the Transport Assessment (T.A.) demonstrates that the development either offers a tangible benefit to the 2028 "without development" scenario (such as at the Silk Mills junction and at the Manor Road signals) or an impact that cannot be considered 'severe' when related to the NPPF (such as at the Cross Keys Roundabout and at the

Bindon Road signals junction). There are no junctions where the traffic impact would be considered to be significant or severe such that refusal of the proposal should be the only option, (so long as all of the mitigation works are carried through).

Firstly, there are a number of on-site (development Specific) highway proposals that are proposed by the application. Most of these proposals are common to both of the Staplegrove applications (west and East). They are considered to be acceptable by the Highway Authority. They are as follows -

- Site Access at Staplegrove West in the form of a signalised junction;
- Site Access at Staplegrove East,
- Development of a spine road linking Staplegrove Road with Taunton Road/Kingston Road);
- Temporary access (restricted movement) arrangement at Manor Road, and longer-term pedestrian and cycling access only;
- A walking and cycling link from the development to the Taunton Academy; and
- Prohibition of vehicle traffic on Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane (south) when the Spine Road has been delivered and is open to traffic to prevent unwanted vehicular short cuts

There are also a number of offsite mitigation measures necessary to make the proposed development acceptable to the Highway Authority. These are common to both applications and will be secured through the legal agreement under s106 of the Act. These are as follows -

- Off-site Cycle improvements to Gypsy Lane to improve connectivity from Staplegrove to the south-west of the site, providing greater connectivity towards Taunton;
- Silk Mills signalised junction with the Cross Keys roundabout (as a combined junction arrangement);
- Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction Signalisation;
- Improvements to capacity and layout at the Kingston Road Gyratory (the complex junction of Kingston Road, Cheddon Road, Greenway Road, Station Road, Priorswood Road and Station Approach);
- Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signals (no physical mitigation is proposed but spine road delivery and linking of the site access to this junction by SCOOT or similar is essential); and
- Travel planning measures, to include but no limited to - bus services / stops and if required improvements; parking, for bikes, motorcycles and vehicles; and travel plan packs and incentives.

The Highway Authority has recognised that there will be other locations affected by the development proposals, but they do not consider that it would be reasonable to require mitigation under s106. These are Bindon Road/Staplegrove Road priority Junction and Staplegrove Road/Greenway Road Mini roundabout. As these junctions cannot be proven to be directly and adversely affected by the proposals, in law, any required improvements would need to be funded through CIL money or from other resources.

Turning to the specific detail of new roads that will be required and junctions that will be impacted requiring improvements, the following points should be noted.

### Access Junction West

This application (Staplegrave West) includes the provision of the Spine Road through both sites and therefore a Junction west of the development to Staplegrave Road is essential for this proposal. The West access junction will be provided in the form of a new signal controlled junction on the A358 Staplegrave Road between Manor Road and the existing Silk Mills roundabout. A second signal controlled junction is proposed to replace of the existing Silk Mills Roundabout. This will result in a right/left stagger arrangement which would be acceptable to the Highway Authority. As the proposed access junction into the urban extension will link into the Silk Mills Junction (with SCOOT or similar), it is considered necessary to combine an improvement at Cross Keys to ensure that the network remains running. Without such an improvement in this location it is likely that the current delay and capacity constraint will be increased due to platooning of traffic from the proposed signalised junctions.

### Access Junction East

This application also includes a junction east of the development to Taunton Road/Kingston Road. This is essential for this (and indeed both west and east) proposals and so is included in both applications. The form of the junction has been discussed above (section c) and it will be secured within the by s106 legal agreement. The Highway Authority consider that the amended proposed signalised cross-roads junction design is deliverable and will ensure that the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is paramount. Capacity is adequately catered for.

### Spine Road

The development at North Taunton is predicated on the delivery of a Spine Road from Kingston Road on the east, across to a point close to Silk Mills roundabout on the west. This road will be of sufficient width to accommodate bus services and will have some development fronting onto it. The Spine Road will come forward as part of phase 1 of both developments and housing numbers will be restricted until such time as it is completed. The route of the Spine Road has been informed by significant due diligence and liaison with officers. A signalised crossroads junction is proposed at the junction of the Spine Road with Kingston Road/Taunton Road to the east and a traffic signal controlled junction is proposed at the junction of the Spine Road with A358 Staplegrave Road to the west in the vicinity of Silk Mills Roundabout. These proposed access junctions include pedestrian crossing facilities and have been developed following discussions with Somerset County Council as Local Highway Authority. With the Spine Road providing an east-west link, bus services will be able to operate through the development, putting all parts of it within a reasonable walking distance of the nearest bus stop. Continuation of new and improved bus services through neighbouring areas will benefit the wider community as well as serving the development.

The Spine Road is considered essential for both East and West developments and will be included within both s106 agreements to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety by either applicant. This will be set within the s106 by appropriate triggers. Currently the Spine Road is proposed to be delivered by the 250th dwelling with regard to Staplegrave West and 326 dwellings, 0.5 ha of employment and a primary school at Staplegrave East, or within five years of the commencement of development (whichever comes first). At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore



Lane (south) will be closed to vehicular traffic, as will the temporary access at Manor Road.

The County Highway Authority have seen, negotiated and commented upon a design for the spine road in order to ensure that such a road is appropriate and can be delivered. However, it is recognised by all parties that this road is not specifically being approved at this outline stage (except for the two junctions at either end, as described above) and this will be finalised and agreed at any Reserved Matters stage. Further detailed design work will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage. Consistency of the scheme, (as part is designed by the East applicant and part is designed by the West applicant) is considered essential to ensure a safe and sufficient piece of infrastructure is provided for all users (vehicles, and non-motorised alike).

#### Manor Road / Staplegrove Road Signalised Junction

The Manor Road / Staplegrove Road junction requires the delivery of the Spine Road (resulting in subsequent reduction in traffic at this junction) in order to operate within capacity in future years with this development. The Provision of SCOOT, or similar is also considered essential to manage the operation and movement along the network, linking with the other proposed Junctions, (West access and Silk Mills). This can all be guaranteed within the s106.

#### Temporary Access

The applicant for this proposal (west) has proposed a temporary access point from Manor Road (in the location of the existing Village World access). It is apparent that this is one of the more contentious aspects of the proposal judging from the third party representations received. It is proposed that this will serve up to 200 dwellings from the west application site only. The applicant has agreed that it will be closed to vehicular traffic at the earlier of the following:

- The Spine Road being completed and open to traffic; or
- Five years from when the temporary access road is constructed and first used.

The Planning arguments for and against this link are discussed in detail above in the 'planning policy and principles' section under part (e) relating to the SADMP. It is now important to consider the technical highways engineering arguments on this proposed temporary link road.

The form of the proposed junction with Manor Road/Corkscrew lane has changed within the revised submission and now proposes a restricted movement junction of 'right in - left out' to try and remove development traffic from routing through the narrow and traffic calmed sections of Manor Road. With regard to proposed residential traffic there is no certainty that the 'right in – left out' arrangement would be adhered to or could be enforced. Therefore, in the interim the Highway Authority deem it realistic to assume there is likely to be an increase in traffic that will travel through Staplegrove Village. They also note that traffic from this temporary junction would have an impact on Manor Road / Corkscrew Lane to the east and the Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane / Corkscrew Lane Junction.

Members will be aware that additional traffic on Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane is a concern to the Highway Authority as well as local residents. Whilst it is noted that this is a temporary access, any additional access on Corkscrew Lane could be considered to be contrary to Policy TAU2. The planning considerations of this have

been discussed in detail above in the 'planning policy and principles' section under part (e) relating to the SADMP. On purely technical highways grounds, in order to satisfy the policy requirement, the Highway Authority considers that a management proposal for Manor Road will be essential. This would be guaranteed through the s106 legal agreement. It is noted that the link assessment of Manor Road shows that both Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane would be close to capacity assuming a road width of 5.5m and no HGVs. The calculation assumed two-way movement and did not allow for pinch points such as the traffic calming features. The margin of uncertainty of this assessment is large, in practice it is not possible to be certain that the link will remain under capacity. It should therefore be acknowledged that peak hour congestion cannot be ruled out with this temporary link and this is a possible concern to the Highway Authority. The Highway Authority makes clear that if the temporary access junction is accepted by Members then it will be imperative that a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is secured, that routes construction traffic via Corkscrew Lane (not Manor Road) and Kingston Road, and that it minimises traffic during peak times. This can be secured through condition but would need appropriate enforcement ability to ensure compliance.

In summary the Highway Authority cannot be entirely certain that the temporary access junction would be delivered without impacting on the village of Staplegrove in the interim (for the temporary period). The Highway Authority has accepted that it is technically possible to create the temporary access, and is minded not to object subject to the provisos and mitigation referred to. Ultimately, it must be a matter for Members to determine if the benefits (as given above in the 'policy and principles' section outweigh the negatives.

Members are again reminded (see reference in earlier section) that if the Council is successful with its current bids for funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (see relevant later section of this report), then it is intended that the money would be used to forward fund the spine road and the proposed temporary access off Corkscrew Lane would not therefore be required.

#### Corkscrew Lane / Kingston Road / Hope Corner Lane Staggered Junction

It is noted within the T.A. and the subsequent Addendum, that this existing Junction requires a mitigation scheme in order to improve safety and visibility with the addition of the development. A further feasibility audit has been undertaken by the County, and the designer's responses considered. There are a number of elements that will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage with regard to the signalised proposal at this location, subject to consent, in order to ensure the proposal is appropriate and deliverable in terms of both safety and capacity. However, at this stage, it is appropriate to note that the Highway Authority consider that such a scheme is achievable and deliverable. Members are made aware that such a scheme is likely to impact upon the green space and trees at this location, in order to provide a safe and appropriate junction. However it has been determined that a scheme could be achieved without detriment or impact to the existing trees at this point which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.

#### Kingston Road Gyratory

The Kingston Road Gyratory is modelled to operate above its practical reserve capacity in the AM peak period in all forecast scenarios and is above capacity in the

PM by 2028. It is clear that the proposed developments (Staplegrave East and West) impact on this junction. The modelled scheme which provides a small benefit, is an improvement on the 'Do Nothing Scenario' but does not completely mitigate the impact. Therefore, a full scheme in this location will be required to be fully funded and delivered by the developers of the East and West and proposals and will need to be secured within Section 106 agreements for both applicants.

#### Pedestrian and Cycle access / improvements

A safe route from the proposed development sites to the Taunton Academy is considered essential for the proposed development. Details of this route will need to be provided as part of a reserved matters application and will be guaranteed through the s106 legal agreement. Improvements to the walking and cycling facilities at Gypsy Lane are also considered necessary in order to improve and encourage sustainable travel in line with Travel Plan proposals from the site.

#### Construction traffic

The proposed development is anticipated to be built over a period of 12 years with the spine road coming forward with the first phase of the development. During this time there will be a mixture of construction traffic and development related traffic. It is envisaged that the proposed spine road will facilitate construction traffic during the development build out to reduce the impact on the existing road network. Construction traffic will make up a progressively lower proportion of the overall traffic volume as the application site is developed.

There would be increased volumes of traffic on the local highway network within Taunton and the surrounding area associated with construction traffic as workers travel to and from the application site each day along with the movement of material by HGV's. However, the changes due to construction traffic would be relatively low in comparison to existing traffic flows and the HGVs will be required to adhere to routing agreements avoiding inappropriate routes through villages. It is expected that the most intensive part of construction would occur at the time as the construction of the spine road. As such, overall it is considered that the significance of the impact would be a temporary minor impact on road users due to the construction of the spine road but minor adverse impact on road users during the build out of the housing.

#### Conclusions to 'traffic impact'

It is clear that without the mitigation that has been proposed then the impact would be considered to be severe in terms of section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is recognised that the impact at some junctions can be offset if the proposed mitigation schemes are implemented through a suitable agreement. With the mitigation measures that have been proposed and provided that the Highway Authority is satisfied that these can be secured and delivered, then on balance the proposal could be considered acceptable in traffic impact terms.

#### (f) Travel Plan.

A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted with this application and this has been subject to discussions between the applicant and the Highway Authority. The latest version has been audited by the Travel Plan Team at the Highway Authority. It should be noted that the TP will need to be secured by an s106 agreement to ensure sufficient safeguarding sums are provided.

There are a few elements within it that need addressing/further details. However, there are just a couple of areas that need further details:

- Further information is required regarding bus services and commitment i.e. aspiration of a free bus for year as mentioned in meeting with Highways.
- Safe routes to schools should be provided for the relevant primary and secondary schools.
- Improve off-site measures i.e. upgrade Gypsy Lane.
- Further details are required regarding the proposed management levy.
- Minor amendments that were not changed as requested from previous audit.

The Highway Authority considers that these are elements that can be discussed further when the s106 is being negotiated or at the reserved matters stage. Where Plans cross over 'East and West', an element of consistency is still required. It is considered beneficial to have one Travel Plan Co-ordinator (TPC) for both sites. Somerset County Council has offered to act as TPC for both Staplegrove developments. In principal subject to changes being made, the Staplegrove east Travel Plan is considered to be close to approval subject to final amendments which should be addressed prior to the settlement of the s106..

(g) Impact on the motorway.

This is covered by comments made on the proposal from Highways England, the Central Government agency that has responsibility for Motorways and trunk roads. It will be noted from their comments (above) that Highways England (H.E.) originally placed a holding objection on this application, meaning that in line with the statutory powers of H.E., the Borough Council could not determine the application in a positive manner until this holding objection was removed. H.E.'s concerns related to the capacity of junction 25 of the motorway to cope with additional traffic that was likely to be generated by this scheme and using this junction. Following amendments to, and a re-run of, the computerised traffic model, H.E. is now satisfied that this proposal will not have adverse impacts upon the junction. As such, they have now made a recommendation of no objection and the Borough Council is permitted to determine the application.

(h) Conclusions to the highways issues.

To conclude, it is recognised that the proposal will result in a significant increase in vehicle movements on the highway network. However the TA and addendum has shown that if all the mitigation measures which are proposed are secured and delivered, then the impact is unlikely to be considered to be severe as set out in section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the impact of the development can therefore be considered acceptable. The Highway Authority is satisfied that the principles of the TP can be considered to be acceptable at this stage, although it should be noted that negotiations are on-going and will need to be secured via the S106. Regarding the principal accesses into the urban extension, the two points of access proposed onto Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road/Taunton Road are considered to be acceptable in principle although it should be noted that these

would need to be secured via a S106 and also subject to a full safety and technical audit. Based on the information set out in the TA, it is the Highway Authority's view that the delivery of the mitigation measures is essential to the acceptability of the application and as such should be secured and delivered by appropriate measures and will be subject to full safety and technical audits. In terms of the internal layout of the site, including the exact position and alignment of the spine (link) road, these are matters that will appropriately be considered at the detailed/reserved matters stage(s). It should be noted that the Highway Authority has had discussions in regards to the spine road link through the site and they are satisfied that the general principle of the link road is acceptable.

On the basis of the above, both the Highway Authority and Highways England, raise no objection to this proposal subject to conditions and legal agreements as specified. Refusal on traffic or transportation grounds could not therefore be justified, so long as the suggested conditions are incorporated into any approval and so long as the required off-site measures can be secured (through a legal agreement).

### **Landscaping and visual amenity considerations.**

#### **(a) Landscape introduction and policy position.**

The planning application is accompanied by a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment which has informed the Landscape and Visual Amenity chapter of the Environmental Statement.

The landscape and visual impact assessment concludes that, while the Proposed Development would have significant effects on the landscape character of the application Site itself, it would not significantly alter the character of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, it argues that those effects would reduce quickly with distance (from the site) so that the overall effects on landscape character types would not be significant. In relation to designated landscapes, it is acknowledged that the development would be visible (at some distance) from the Quantock hills AONB and that there would be some adverse effect on a small portion of Rag Hill. However, it is not considered that the impact is great enough to justify an objection on landscaping grounds. This will be explored and explained further in this section.

The starting point for investigation of the landscaping impacts of this proposal has to be the policy position. Nationally, this is covered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012. Particularly relevant is section 7 (Requiring Good Design), in which para. 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments - *“respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation”* and *“are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping”*; and section 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment), in which para. 109 states that *“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”*.

At a more local level, policy CP8 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (September 2012) is relevant because it states that *“The Borough Council will conserve and enhance the natural historic environment, and will not permit development proposals*

*that would harm these interests of the settings of the towns and rural centres unless other material factors are sufficient to override their importance”.*

More recently, the Council has adopted its ‘Site Allocation and Development Management Plan’ [SADMP], in which a number of policies are relevant. Policy ENV1 (Protection of trees, woodland, orchards and hedgerows) maintains that – *“Development should seek to minimise impact on trees, woodlands, orchards, historic parklands and hedgerows of value to the area’s landscape, character or wildlife and seek to provide net gain where possible. Where the loss is unavoidable..... adequate provision must be made to compensate for this loss”.* Policy ENV2 (Tree planting within new developments) states that *“The planting of trees within new developments shall be sought where this would benefit wildlife and biodiversity, enhance landscape or public amenity. Trees should be planted in (A) communal areas and along streets or/and between buildings; and (B) On highway verges (depending on safety issues and reasonable cost of future maintenance). Development proposals should where possible provide a broad mix of native and non-native trees”.* Policy ENV3 (Special Landscape Features) maintains that *“Development which would significantly harm the appearance, character and contribution of landscape quality within Special Landscape Features will not be permitted unless appropriate mitigation measure would reduce such harm to an acceptable level”.* This is especially important with this application as the Rag Hill Special Landscape Feature runs along the site’s northern boundary and through the western end of the site. Policy D1 (Taunton’s skyline) states that *“Development which would detract from the distinctive character and attractiveness of Taunton’s skyline will not be permitted”.* Policy D2 (Approach routes to Taunton and Wellington) requires that *“Development which would harm the visual qualities of routes into and out of Taunton and Wellington will not be permitted”.* Policy TAU2 (Staplegrove) is also relevant to the landscape assessment in a more general sense, but specifically the following bullet points which make clear that any proposal for development at Staplegrove must be accompanied by a masterplan and phasing strategy should to include (amongst other requirements) -

- An extension of the Green Wedge on either side of Mill Lease Stream, between Corkscrew Lane and the open countryside north of the existing 132kV power lines;
- Multi-functional green space (including allotments, children’s play, playing fields, recreational areas, amenity space) in line with the relevant standards;
- sensitive incorporation of the West Deane Way;
- Protection of Rag Hill special landscape feature by not allowing built development to break the skyline; and
- Landscape buffers and planting belts, including a belt along the outer edges of the development area, facing bat activity from Hestercombe.

(b) Landscape evaluation and attributes of the application site.

Taunton and the Application Site sit within National Character Area 146 – Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes, as designated within Natural England’s National Character Areas document. Taunton lies towards the south of this large character area that spans from the Somerset Coast in the north to the Blackdown Hills in the south. This assessment characterises large areas in a ‘broad brush’ manner as it inevitably has to when looking at such matters on a national scale. To that end it is of limited value to this assessment. However, amongst its ‘key characteristics’ which

may be considered pertinent to the application site and its surroundings are the following identified characteristics -

- Woodland cover is generally low, at 6 per cent, although the area has a wooded feel as there are many hedgerow trees (such as oak), orchards, remnants of parkland, small woodlands with ash and oak and bankside trees such as alder.
- Lowland mixed farming landscape, with dense hedgerows enclosing rectilinear fields.
- Permanent grassland characterises the floodplain with arable, pasture, market gardening and orchards in the vales and pasture and arable on more undulating land.
- Scattered settlements of farmstead, hamlets and villages linked by sunken winding lanes.

The Borough Council has commissioned two of its own local landscape character assessments which are considerably more detailed and because of their scale are considered more relevant to this assessment. These are the Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment (2011) and the Landscape Character Assessment of Taunton's Rural-Urban Fringe – Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2005. These documents give descriptions of the characteristics of the site as they were recorded at the time of the studies.

More relevant though is the site as it currently is today. The application site lies adjacent to the village of Staplegrove, and comprises a number of large agricultural fields, defined and enclosed by mature hedgerows, several of which also support mature trees. It consists of 39.76 hectares of land comprising a number large irregular shaped fields defined by mature hedgerows, a mature hedgerow network, with a number of mature trees, several of which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders, and two public rights of way crossing the site in a north/south direction. The greater part of the Application Site is located immediately to the south of Rag Hill, a shallow, but distinctive ridge that runs in a broadly south-west to north-east direction. The fields within the site slope gently southwards down towards the existing urban edge from high points along the ridge line of between approximately 47m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and 32m AOD. At its western end, the Application Site includes the western face of Rag Hill as it wraps around to meet the A358, Staplegrove Road. Site levels drop to 29m AOD at the Silk Mills roundabout on the A358 and 32m AOD along Manor Road. The application site has good views northwards to the Quantock Hills from the top of the Rag Hill ridge, whereas views to and from the immediate south are curtailed by Staplegrove and the northern edge of Taunton. The northern boundary of the Application Site is formed by mature, hedgerows which run along, or close to, the ridge of Rag Hill. To the south the boundary is Staplegrove Village. The centre of the village is designated as a Conservation Area, albeit for the most part this does not have a physical or visual relationship with the Application Site.

There are a many mature trees on site, a number of which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). All trees and hedgerows found within the application site make an important contribution to its character and the site supports a strong and consistent small to medium scale field pattern bounded by a strong network of hedgerows.

### (c) Special Landscape Feature - Rag Hill

Rag Hill is a distinctive feature in the landscape, and has been designated a Special Landscape Feature (SLF) by the Council under policy ENV3 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, adopted December 2016. Although, Special Landscape Features have been recognised for much longer, having been referenced in the Taunton Deane Local Plan (2004) under policy EN11. Rag Hill was part of that policy designation. Rag Hill wraps around the higher, flatter fields from the A358 (Staplegrove Road) to Whitmore Lane in the east. The character of the area is intrinsically rural, with the A358 and the overhead electricity pylons being the only notable detractors from its character. It is steepest at its western end, the escarpment forming a prominent feature in views approaching Taunton, and gradually flattening out as it runs eastwards. The Special Landscape Features Assessment (2014) notes that *'the escarpment significantly 'hides' the built up areas of Staplegrove village as seen from the Vale of Taunton Deane'* (to the north).

Although the SLF is considered to have a 'high' level of sensitivity, the larger part of this Special Landscape Feature lies outside the application site boundary, the exception being the westernmost field adjacent to Staplegrove Road which would accommodate the spine road junction, the small area at the site's north-eastern extent through which the spine road would run and a strip of land at the northern edge of the allocated site which is designated for structural landscape planting. These areas would be very highly susceptible to the proposed development. Any effects on the character of the SLF outside of the application boundary would be as a result of changes to its setting.

In terms of the impact of the development upon the SLF, there are positive and negative points. Firstly, the majority of the existing electricity pylons on the skyline would be undergrounded which would be a beneficial change. There would need to be some terminal pylons where the cabling enters and exits the ground, but most of the lines and pylons would be removed from the SLF, thus improving its appearance. The scheme also proposes planting along its northern boundary, which would come forward early as part of Phase 1a. This would be located along the existing hedgeline along the south of the SLF ridge. This would change the character of the ridge, more so to the west, as it would give rise to a 'treed' skyline setting to the hill rather than the open setting that it currently has towards the steeper, western slopes. In the early years it would be possible to see the proposed development, but over time this would become filtered by the northern boundary planting. It is considered that most of the SLF would be able to accommodate this change to its setting in the form of a 'treed' rather than 'open' skyline, without undue consequences. Similar belts of native planting are proposed along the top of the ridge immediately to the west of Staplegrove Farm, however this would not be planted until associated development comes forward and in the short term, prior to the planting maturing, the new development would form the setting of this field.

The westernmost field of the SLF falls within the application site boundary and would be the location for the new Silk Mills junction and the route of the spine road into the site. The construction of the new junction would necessitate the removal of four trees and 70m of hedgerow along the northern side of Staplegrove Road. It would also involve the excavation of a large volume of spoil in order to create a more level platform for the new spine road. The slopes to the side of the road would be graded



to 1 in 3 and be planted with a mix of native tree species. The introduction of the new road and junction would give rise to an extensive and irreversible change to the western field of the SLF which would amount to a very significant effect in LVIA terms. However, it is considered to be a short term impact because over time the planting would help to soften the road and integrate it into the surrounding natural environment.

In conclusion, it is acknowledged that there will be some short term impacts upon the SLF, but in the longer term, the impacts will be substantially mitigated. By Year 1, the proposed development be would largely screened and by Year 15, the views would be of a wooded skyline along the top of the Rag Hill Ridge. The removal of the pylons from the view is considered to be a positive impact. The imposition of the new spine road, will eventually be lessened by surrounding planting and the benefits of removing traffic from the manor Road/Corkscrew Lane route are considered to outweigh any longer term residual impact upon the wider environment arising from the completion of the new spine road. In the long term, while the 'open' character of the Rag Hill ridge would change to one of a treed skyline, this is not considered to be out of keeping with the area. It is considered that these effects, whilst significant, are localised and it is not considered that they extend to the wider Rag Hill SLF. The Development will undoubtedly have an impact on the setting of Rag Hill SLF but the extensive tree planting proposed will help mitigate the impact.

(d) Relationship with the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies approximately 2.5km to the north of the proposed development with the Blackdown Hills AONB approximately 7km to the south. There is no doubt that the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. This is enshrined within the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-2019. The development currently proposed is not within the boundaries of the AONB, nor is it immediately adjacent. The nearest parts of the AONB boundary and the edge of the proposed urban extension will be some 2 kilometres apart for the eastern proposal and where the spine road is proposed to join Kingston Road/Taunton Road. In the case of this current application, that distances increases to approximately 2.5 kilometres. Therefore any impact upon the AONB is more likely to be in terms of views out from within its boundaries and potential for light pollution to the dark skies it enjoys at night.

One of the primary scenic viewpoints within the AONB is the lookout point on Cothelstone Hill. This is an area of access land which rises to an elevation of 332 metres AOD and enjoys good views over the town of Taunton and the rural Vale of Taunton beyond. It is possible to discern Rag Hill as a notable feature on the vale floor in the distance, beyond which it is also possible to discern a number of the application site fields and their associated vegetation, albeit they form a very small part of a wider panoramic view. From this location it would be possible to discern the proposed development immediately to the north of Taunton, although it would be seen at this distance in the context of the overall urban form of Taunton. The northern boundary planting has been programmed to be planted at Phase 1a, in order to maximise its screening potential as the site is developed. In the early years it would be possible to discern the new urban form from this location, but over time as the

planting matured, the development would be increasingly softened and would act to assimilate the harder built form of Taunton into the softer Vale of Taunton beyond. The Proposed Development would very much be seen sitting well below the skyline and forming a small part of a wider panorama. This means that in terms of the potential for night time light pollution, something which is important to the AONB, the proposal would add little to that already experienced. The submitted LVIA concludes that the impact of the proposed new development at Staplegrove west would constitute a very low ('minor') magnitude of effect in the long term which is not considered significant. Officers agree with this conclusion.

The AONB service has commented that this proposal, alongside applications for the east-west spine road and Staplegrove east, represents a major development into open agricultural land that is visible from, and provides a setting to, the nationally protected Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They make clear that it is in the nation's interest to protect this very special landscape from the potential harm of development. However, they recognise the need for Taunton to grow and so are realistic about, and do not object to, the principle of development on the northern edge of Taunton. That said, they do express concern about the scale of this development. They comment that the Staplegrove west development (combined with the road and the adjoining development to the east) will lead to the loss of a large area of the agricultural land which forms part of the Vale that offers a clear sense of separation between the urban environment of Taunton and the gateway to the nationally protected landscape at Kingston St Mary. The AONB Service has expressed particular concern about location of the east-west spine road on higher ground in the northern half of the site because of the likely visibility of the road ahead of maturity of proposed tree planting around Rag Hill.

Other concerns expressed by the AONB Service are

- The potential for increased traffic flow over the Quantocks (for drivers with a Bridgwater or M5 north destination or requiring access to transport links to Hinkley Point) which would have an adverse impact on the rural road network and tranquillity levels in the protected landscape.
- The proposed junction on Kingston Road may adversely affect the character of this route into the Quantock Hills – urbanising the road access to the hills.
- The undergrounding of electricity power lines will lead to two terminal towers – one of which is proposed in the northeast part of the site and likely therefore to be visible en route along Kingston Road into the Quantocks.

These are all fundamental considerations, and would affect consideration of the current proposal whatever its size and its proposed layout of land uses. It is noted that the Full Council did not make any specific references to the AONB when they considered and agreed the masterplan for Staplegrove. It is also noted that neither policy SS6 of the Core Strategy nor policy TAU2 of the SADMP make any specific reference to the AONB or the need to protect it from any aspects of the development. The SADMP is of course up to date and carries maximum weight having only been approved in December 2016. It is difficult therefore to know how best to deal with the concerns expressed by the AONB Service, because considerations of the spine road, its access onto Kingston Road and the need to underground the electricity pylons (necessitating terminal towers) has already been considered at public examination

and has now been formally adopted as policy by the Council. Clearly the Council cannot now rewrite or re-interpret its adopted policy and the broad general requirements of the proposal as agreed in the masterplanning exercise must stand. It is also recognised that the potential for impact relates mainly to the views out from the AONB and potential additional traffic on nearby roads rather than any specific direct impact to facilities or uses within the AONB boundary itself. However, it is accepted that maximum effort should be taken to try and minimise any potential impact upon the AONB. This would really be a consideration more for the detailed and reserved matters stages of the urban extension process. So on balance, it is not considered that there is reasonable grounds for withholding consent to this outline proposal based upon potential impact to the AONB.

(e) Proposed green infrastructure of the application.

The green infrastructure proposed by this application creates a network of north-south connections between Staplegrove and the open countryside to the north, integrating existing public rights of way and retaining landscape features. Green corridor connections across the site are considered to provide a good landscape setting for the scheme. The northern edge is identified as being visually sensitive in the 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) from the AONB towards Staplegrove. Thus, an 18 metre planting buffer is proposed along the northern boundary to provide a robust visual screen. This is reduced to 14 metres at pinch points surrounding Rectory Road which are naturally protected by existing houses. Pocket parks have been created as expansions for the northern buffer allowing opportunity to provide key view points along the ridgeline towards the AONB. This particular part of the overall proposal (Staplegrove west) also includes a large area of 'green' and 'blue' space at its south-western end where it joins the Cross Keys area and where one of the two junctions for the new spine road is proposed. This will contain parks, play space and rainwater attenuation facilities.

(f) The Green Wedge.

Green Wedges have been protected through policy in Taunton Deane since the East Taunton Local Plan publication of 1991. The policy wording has changed little during that time. Currently the policy states that the key policy objectives of Green Wedges are to:

- Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods;*
- Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents;*
- Bring the countryside into the heart of town;*
- Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play;*
- Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat;*
- Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity; and*
- Provide a positive approach to land use.*

The Council has resolved that green wedges should be proposed to be delivered as an integral part of all of its urban extensions, where they will be expected to adopt Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards and contribute to the TDBC Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The existing Staplegrove Green Wedge is located to the south east of the application Site, between the communities of Staplegrove and Wellsprings. It should be noted that the existing Green Wedge is mainly given over to sports pitches, allotments and

a sports centre. The Core Strategy identifies two development areas at Staplegrove separated by an extension to this existing green wedge to the north on either side of Mill Lease Stream (hence the west and east applications). The recently adopted SADMP identifies the proposed green wedge as stretching from Corkscrew Lane in the south to the open countryside north of the existing 132 kilovolt power lines. No reference is made in either policy document to its width. However, the Taunton Deane Green Wedge Assessment of June 2015 does identify a northern extension to the existing green wedge area in line with potential future development.

There is an expectation that the proposals that come forwards will follow the identified line for the extension. However, the applicants maintain that this line is indicative and therefore they proposed that the interface between the built form and the Green Wedge should be of a more organic nature.

Through the ensuing iteration of the Staplegrove Framework Plan for the combined east and west Staplegrove developments, the shape, extent, complementary land uses and edges of the green wedge became more defined. The design of the landscape layout and functionality of the extension to the green wedge now proposed takes into account the adjacent land uses and includes appropriate offsets and compatible land use buffers around adjacent land uses and in particular, the hamlet on Whitmore Lane. It includes substantial areas of open green space, native mixed species tree and hedge planting, footpath and cycleway networks, sustainable drainage ponds and space for equipped play and informal recreation. The primary school site playing fields and playground are also included.

The Green Wedge area in general is clearly visually sensitive and therefore it has been retained as open space within the agreed masterplan. The area which is proposed as future Green Wedge is currently rural in nature. The proposed Staplegrove west and east schemes extend the existing green wedge northwards both within and beyond the extension identified in TDBC's Green Wedge Assessment 2015 and Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) 2016. However, the extension proposed in the applications is narrower east to west. A boundary has been proposed which broadly follows the contours of the land. So although the proposed green wedge is narrower than envisaged, it does retain a similar area coverage to that envisaged. Officers do not consider that this is a significant departure.

As previously reference, neither core strategy policy SS6 nor SADMP policy TAU2 specify a size or dimension for the green wedge. The only reference to size is the very general indication given in the concept plan that accompanies policy TAU2, but even this is not an accurate reflection of the proposed boundary given in the Taunton Deane Green Wedge Assessment document of June 2015. In policy terms there is no stated requirement for any subsequent planning application at Staplegrove to exactly follow the boundary line of the proposed extension. The only real test afforded by policy consideration is the seven key objectives for green wedges listed in the justification for policy CP8 of the Core Strategy. Does the current submission meet these criteria?

Objective 1 - Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods.

The proposals extend the existing green wedge to the north and prevent the east and west parts of the proposed developments from coalescing. Also by extending out to the application site boundary, the proposed green wedge prevents coalescing further to the north. This maintains openness and conserves the view out towards the Quantock Hills. Planting typical of the local landscape is proposed throughout the green wedge and a new native tree belt to the north is designed to integrate the urban development within the pattern of the existing field framework to integrate the edges of the development into the wider surrounding landscape and to provide ecological separation between the town and the foraging habitat of bats linked to the Hestercombe SAC.

Objective 2 - Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents

The green wedge has been designed to be inclusive and accessible and provides varying recreational activities and visual amenity. The boundary broadly extends from the existing built form out into the wider landscape which provides the opportunity for the development to be orientated towards the green wedge resulting in an active frontage and a sympathetic interface between the development and green wedge. This will maximise the benefit of the direct visual relationship between residential development and green open space, and also allows for passive surveillance of the open space which is likely to contribute to residents' sense of safety and willingness to use the space.

Objective 3 - Bring the countryside into the heart of town

The proposed green wedge extends northwards, so creating a continuous green infrastructure and open space link from the town to the open countryside. It has been designed to prevent built form development wrapping around it to the north, and so will maintain this physical and visual connection to the countryside. The applicant proposes that the landscape design throughout the green wedge will include open grassy space, native mixed species hedge and tree planting and watercourses and sustainable drainage features.

Objective 4 - Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play

The proposals provide formal and informal recreational opportunities including a connected network of cycle ways and footpaths, picnic benches, seating, space for organisations and community groups and allotments. The green wedge will also include extensions to strategic foot and cycle way network to and from the town centre and from east to west connecting the new and existing neighbourhoods.

Most of this however, will be designed at the reserved matters stage.

Objective 5 - Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat

The green wedge provides a habitat link and foraging for birds, bats, dormice and insects amongst others. Planting design will aim to increase native species diversity and is connected to the new native tree belt proposed to the north east and north-west. Substantial areas of mixed native species planting of hedges and trees, sustainable drainage and wildlife ponds and water courses and areas with species rich grassland will enhance habitat provision and quality and will be suitable for many species. This can be guaranteed at the reserved matters stage. Objective 6 - Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity

The proposed green wedge will provide well connected, publicly accessible green space with habitat links and foraging opportunities for birds, bats and insects. It will also be a resource for visual amenity, recreation and relaxation for the local community.

## Objective 7 - Provide a positive approach to land use

The proposals provide a good approach to land use through the provision of visual amenity, the opportunity for passive surveillance, diverse recreational opportunities and habitat links and foraging opportunities. The proposals for use of the green wedge also provide multifunctional water management opportunities through integrated sustainable drainage features.

Therefore, on every objective, it is officer's view that the proposed green wedge meets the criteria specified and so there would be no reasonable ground for refusing to accept the proposed size (width) of the green wedge in policy terms. In fact there are two particular positive features that derive from the plans as proposed. Firstly, the applicants are keen to ensure that the alternative edge for the built form surrounding the green wedge is orientated inwards so that a more active frontage is achieved with a sympathetic interface between the development and the adjoining open space. Secondly, recent surveys have identified that the existing Green Wedge area to the south of Corkscrew Lane was not found to have key importance for protected species. The extension of the applicant's proposed boundary to the open countryside to the north provides the long term potential for improved connectivity to the existing green wedge and amenity land to the south particularly if that land were to be favourably managed for biodiversity through new hedges and tree planting and the creation of ponds.

In summary, the applicant has proposed an alternative boundary following detailed site-level appraisal and masterplanning which meets the Council's Green Wedge objectives and also contributes towards ecological enhancement. The proposed Green Wedge extension will successfully perform the 7 key policy objectives of the adopted Core Strategy. The Green Wedge land area, the edge interface arrangement and content of the proposed new Green Wedge, will, in combination with the existing, further enhance the overall policy objectives and functional quality of the Staplegrove Green Wedge. The small apparent reduction in width of the proposal, when compared to that proposed by TDBC in the Green Wedge Assessment 2015, has no material effect on its fulfilling these policy objectives. Ultimately Member are not being asked to approve the width or overall size of the green wedge with this outline application in any event, although there would be a presumption in favour of the size indicated with any approval when it came to the detailed and reserved matters. Officers are satisfied that the green wedge now indicated in the current submission is broadly in line with the agreed masterplan and would not be in conflict with any adopted policy. For these reasons, officers are not objecting to the proposal in this regard.

### (g) Conclusions (on landscape and visual amenity issues).

The scheme has some less desirable (landscape) features such as -

- The development will impact on existing landscape features in the form of removal of some existing hedgerow and the felling of existing trees;
- Development will have an impact on the setting of Rag Hill SLF;
- Two new terminal towers for the undergrounding of the electricity cables will need to be installed (if the power lines are undergrounded);
- Construction of the new silk mills junction which involves the removal of vegetation along a 70 metre stretch of Staplegrove Road followed by the excavation at the mouth

of the new junction, would involve the removal of a large amount of material to facilitate levels for the new road;

- There will be some, but very limited impact on the visual amenities experienced when viewing out of the AONB, particularly from the existing visitor attractions and scenic view points.

- The success of the landscape strategy will depend on landscape management and maintenance establishment of woodland buffer and SUDs features. There is no mention at this outline stage on who will maintain these, but this should be referenced in the s106 legal agreement.

- The Staplegrove west development would move the existing urban edge some 300m further to the north and would form the new interface between the town and the Vale of Taunton.

However, the proposal has considerable advantages in landscape terms, which can be summarised as follows -

- The proposals meet the recommendations of the NPPF in that the functionality, quality and sustainability of the proposals have been considered.

- Core Strategy Policy CP8 and the SADMP have been well integrated into the proposals, particularly with reference to the Green Wedge proposals that create significant new public open space.

- The proposals build on the earlier masterplanning studies and include the majority of the recommendations from these.

- An 18 metre wide buffer of native planting would be introduced along the northern boundary to the application site. As well as providing an ecological corridor, this would help to soften and filter views of the development when viewed from the north, easing the transition to the rural landscape with the density of development being decreased towards this.

- Many of the hedges and trees existing on the site have been maintained and incorporated into the development. This can be guaranteed through the landscaping reserved matters.

- The sensitivity of the SLF has been well considered with no proposed built form in the immediate vicinity of the western face of Rag Hill and tree planting introduced to help mitigate the effects of the new Silk Mills Junction.

- Effects on the Quantock Hills AONB would be noticeable, with the built envelope of Taunton moving further north. However, Distance views of the development from the AONB will appear in context of the town, as the development will sit well below the skyline. With the extensive green infrastructure breaking up the site and the distance, this is not considered to be significant.

- Visual effects are assessed as reducing in significance at greater distance from the development with only some very close viewpoints experiencing change that could be described as significantly adverse. The mitigation proposals seek to reduce these and it is considered that they will be largely successful.

- In general a strong landscape strategy has been used to direct the development within the Masterplan area which will result in an attractive and cohesive development.

- The layout has been configured to retain and take advantage of existing lanes and footpaths as well as the mature trees that characterise the site.

- It is the Land Promoters intention that the development will be designed to overlook the Green Wedge, providing an attractive outlook as well as natural surveillance.
- The southernmost field adjacent to the Conservation Area is proposed as allotments and attenuation, to avoid locating built form in this area.
- There would be no built development in the area to the north of Langford Bridge (adjacent to Cross Keys). This is primarily to be used as a flood attenuation area due to its disposition. However, it would keep the approach to Taunton from the west open and 'green'.
- The existing electricity lines are proposed to be undergrounded. This has clear environmental and visual benefits. It should be noted that this is still the subject of negotiations between the applicants and the owners of the power lines – Western Power Distribution.

However, for the most part these benefits, will only become realised once detailed negotiations take place on any reserved matters. At this outline stage, it is considered sufficient to note that the application could be delivered without significantly adverse, long term or irreversible impacts. The Landscape and Visual Impact assessment (LVIA) is considered to be sound and reliable as it uses up to date and current guidance. The LVIA concludes that, from a landscape and visual perspective, the application site is suitable for the proposed development due to the proposed mitigation which has been included in order to reduce the landscape and visual effects of the proposals. The applicant appears to have a good appreciation of the scheme design and has recommended appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. A strong integral landscape strategy has been used to direct the development. Officers believe that the proposals have demonstrated how the urban extension is a suitable response to the site and its setting and that there are no outstanding issues which either have not been resolved or are not capable of resolution (in landscaping terms) when the reserved matters are submitted. Therefore, when the positive and negative aspects of the proposal are considered, at least in relation to landscape and visual aspects, it is the view of the Council's Landscape and Planning Officer's that the proposals are acceptable, would not cause an unacceptable level of negative impact and the benefits of the scheme in delivering much needed housing (as required by the Local Plan), outweigh the negative and mainly local effects and the application can therefore be supported on landscape grounds.

### **Flood risk and drainage issues (incl. ground conditions and contamination).**

#### **(a) Flood Risk**

The Environment Agency flood map shows the site lies predominantly within Flood Zone 1. This means that it is an area outside the limit of extreme flooding from tidal or fluvial sources with less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of flooding. An area to the west, adjacent to the Back Stream, and an area to the east, adjacent to the Mill Lease Stream, are within Flood Zones 2 and 3 '*High Probability*' (as defined in NPPF Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) '*Flood Risk and Coastal Change*' Table 1). However, the proposed development masterplan shows that all development will be within Flood Zone 1, therefore there is no requirement to apply the Exception Test. The application site falls within an area allocated within the Core Strategy and therefore is not subject to the Sequential Test.



There are no existing watercourses within the proposed development boundary. The Back Stream flows adjacent to the western boundary of the site. The existing open agricultural land discharges into both a local watercourse and the existing highway sewer network via a number of field ditches. The western end on the site discharges into Back Stream, which flows in a southerly direction before meeting Norton Brook near Silk Mills Road, approximately 1.2km south of the proposed development site. There is a short section of 150mm diameter foul water sewer passing within the site boundary in the vicinity of Manor Road, but otherwise the records show no public surface water or combined sewers currently existing within the site.

The submitted strategy for the development consists of attenuation ponds with outlet controls into the Back Stream and existing surface water drainage network where appropriate. This has been demonstrated to result in a reduction of peak runoff rates to 2l/s/ha for discharges from the site. The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) demonstrates that the proposed development is safe, does not increase flood risk downstream and is in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy. This has been supported by the Environment Agency (whose initial concerns have now been overcome) and the Lead Local Flood Authority at Somerset County Council, both of whom now have no objection to the proposal (the LLFA subject to conditions).

Infiltration drainage potential is limited at the site due to the impermeable nature of the geology. Surface water runoff will need to be discharged to the site to the Back Stream and nearby surface water sewers at controlled rates. The proposed surface water management strategy is to attenuate runoff to 2 l/s/ha for all return periods up to the 1 in 100 year plus 30% climate change event. Calculations show that up to 877m<sup>3</sup> of attenuation per hectare of impermeable development will be required. This will be provided by means of open storage basins or long linear swales serving each sub-catchment across the development. Sufficient land has been provided within the masterplan to create the storage features at suitable locations outside of any flood zones. The proposed surface water drainage network includes a variety of SUDS. The FRA demonstrates that the risk of flooding to the proposed development is low and that future occupants and users of the proposed development will be safe from flooding and there will be no detrimental impact on third parties. The proposal therefore complies with the NPPF and local planning policy with respect to flood risk.

(b) Ground conditions.

The submitted Environmental Statement is accompanied by a phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment, which looks at the issues of contamination and geotechnics, as required to support the outline planning application to develop the site for residential use. The objective of the report is to identify the likely ground conditions and to assess whether there are potential risks associated with the ground conditions that might require management/mitigation as part of the development proposals. The evidence submitted included a desk study (review of publicly available data), walkover inspection, preliminary minerals assessment and a 'tier 1' preliminary qualitative risk assessment.

The main findings of the ground conditions assessment are that the site is likely to be underlain by clay soils that will exhibit some shrink and swell characteristics due to

both seasonal effects and the effects of trees and other vegetation. Adherence to published design and construction protocols, such as incorporating minimum foundation depths, would however be sufficient to ensure that there is no increased risk to the proposed development. Based on the outcomes of this report, Low geo-environmental risk estimation pollution has been identified meaning that the site is unlikely to be “contaminated land” as described under part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act. The report also shows that radon protection measures are not required for any new dwellings. Given the level of risk and the proposed end use, the report anticipates that a geo-environmental ground investigation is not required to support the planning application for development of the site. Finally, the study demonstrates that the River Terrace Deposits on site, shown on the Somerset Minerals Plan (SMP) as a Minerals Safeguarding Area, does not contain an economically viable sand and/or gravel deposit. For this reason Policy SMP 9 does not apply for the site as an exemption is applicable on the basis that prior extraction is not practicable or viable and the merits of the development outweigh the safeguarding of the mineral.

In summary, the report concludes that it is unlikely that there are any geo-environmental and geo-technical ground conditions that will have any significant implications for the site layout and land usage of the proposed development. Mitigation measures that are stated as being required will be mostly incorporated into the design of the buildings responding to ground conditions and through the implementation of good practice and environmental management procedures during the construction phase. Following implementation of these measures all residual impacts are considered to be neutral/not significant. None of this is disputed, and it would not in any event affect the ability of the Planning Committee to grant planning permission.

### **Archaeological, cultural heritage and conservation issues.**

The planning application is accompanied by an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment, the results of which have informed the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage chapter of the Environmental Statement. This assessment has considered whether the significance of any heritage assets would be harmed as a result of changes to setting resulting from the proposed residential development.

This assessment identifies that -

1. There are no designated heritage assets (Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Conservation Areas) located within the proposed development site itself;
2. Staplegrove Lodge (Grade II Listed) and Staplegrove Conservation Area are both located in proximity to the proposed development site.
3. There are 2 Grade II\* and 18 Grade II Listed Buildings in the wider landscape surrounding the proposed development site. Possible alterations to the setting of a number of these designated heritage assets might have the potential to affect the significance of those assets; and
4. There is the potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains of Roman, and possibly also prehistoric origin to survive within the proposed development site. These will require further investigation and, potentially mitigation. For this reason, the assessment concentrated on a settings assessment (3 above) and the archaeological finds (4 above).

The assessment concluded the following -

In relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990), it is considered that there will be no harm to any Listed Buildings, either directly or via changes to their setting, as a result of the proposed development. The proposed development would result in no harm to any other heritage assets, including Grade II Listed Stonehouse Farm and associated structures; Grade II Listed Staplegrove Lodge; Grade II\* Listed Yarde Farmhouse; Grade II Listed Smokey; and Grade II Listed Slapes.

Norton Camp is the only Scheduled Monument, or heritage assets of comparable value, within the surrounding area. This is, however, some 900 metres west of the proposed development. The assessment found that it would not be susceptible to impact from development within the proposed site.

The archaeological assessment identified remains dating from the Prehistoric to post-medieval periods. Evidence for activity on site which may pre-date the Iron Age was represented by four pieces of worked flint. Archaeological features which date to the Middle Iron Age to 4th-century AD were identified in the central part of the site and appear to represent agricultural and settlement activity. Evidence for post-medieval agricultural activity was also identified. Consultation with the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council has established that the archaeological remains identified within the allocation site are not of sufficient significance to require preservation in situ or to otherwise preclude development.

The proposed development site lies outside of the Staplegrove Conservation Area and therefore, in terms of Section 72 of the Act, any impact would need to be considered in terms of its setting. The proposed development would lead to a small degree of change, and harm, to small parts of the northern edge of the Conservation Area, through alteration to setting. However, overall, a beneficial effect would be anticipated, as a result of the diversion of traffic from the Conservation Area along the proposed new link/spine road. At present the volume of traffic passing through, and adjacent to, Staplegrove Conservation Area is detrimental to the experience and appreciation of the Conservation Area, and thus to its overall heritage significance.

Advice has been offered on how any impact upon the heritage assets considered could be minimised. This would be a matter for a design response at the detailed or reserved matters stages. There is verifiable evidence to show that this can be achieved. At this outline stage though, it should be noted that there is general agreement between the applicant, Officers and Historic England. Historic England noted that at full application stage a further review will be required, alongside detailed plans and photomontages showing the proposed impact. Of the assets that have potential to be affected they are particularly interested to understand fully the impact upon the formal setting of Pyrland Hall, with its formal landscape. Also they will require access to Oakhill to better understand any potential impact upon this listed building. The Council's Conservation Officer considers that the potential impact of the scheme on the setting of some of the listed buildings may be slightly downplayed in the reports, for example Staplegrove Lodge. However, he does note that this is a matter of judgement. He does however, confirm that in no case is the harm greater than 'less

than substantial' and this can be reduced by mitigation measures and under paragraph 134 of the NPPF weighed against the public benefits.

As directed by Paragraph 134 of the NPPF (2012), the finding that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets, coupled with the anticipated beneficial impact on the significance of Staplegrove Conservation Area, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal by the decision maker (the Planning Committee). It is considered that the public benefits the proposal would bring identified elsewhere in this report, particularly in achieving the Core Strategy's and the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan's (SADMP) vision for a mixed use urban extension at Staplegrove and thereby contributing to meeting the Borough's housing needs, do outweigh the limited harm to designated heritage assets and the statutory presumption in favour of their preservation. Officers are of the opinion that the proposed development would not result in harm to the historic environment as a result of changes to setting, and, as such, is consistent with Policy CP8 (Environment) of the 'Taunton Deane Core Strategy, 2012 and ENV4 (Archaeology) of the SADMP (2016).

### **Biodiversity (Ecology and nature conservation)**

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the primary legislation for England and Wales for the protection of flora, fauna and the countryside. Most European Protected Species offences are now covered under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, but some 'intentional' acts are still covered under the 1981 act. Under the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Planning Authorities should use the planning system to, *'...contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline of biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'* It goes on to state: *"when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity" and "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged"*. The adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy states in the relevant policy CP 8 (Environment) that the aim is to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment, and to not permit development proposals that would harm these interests or the settings of the towns and rural centres unless other material factors are sufficient to override their importance.

An ecological survey has been submitted as part of the Environmental Statement and this assesses the ecological impact of the proposals, identifies ecological constraints, mitigation measures required and also identifies enhancement measures that may be available. AA Environmental Ltd carried out the Ecological report for this application at Staplegrove west (dated February 2016) whilst Wildwood Consultants have carried out the ecological report for the Staplegrove east proposals. The two ecologists have carried out extensive survey work on the site over a number of years.

The application site is currently dominated by cattle and sheep grazed pasture (improved grassland/arable fields) with boundary hedgerows. The site is generally recognised to be of low ecological value although it does contain features such as hedgerows, trees, ponds and woodland. Despite the land itself being of low ecological

value, there are a number of European Protected Species using the site including 10 species of bat, great crested newts, badgers and dormice. This is significant and demonstrates how green wedges can bring species like these closer to urban communities.

An urban fringe development such as this should soften the lines between town and country, bringing wildlife into the development and allowing people to engage easily with the countryside. The site will change from this intensively farmed land to a designed housing scheme retaining and enhancing key features and creating a range of new habitats, including domestic gardens, public open space, productive landscapes and wilder areas. As a starting point, it should be noted that nowhere in the site has any form of designation for ecological purposes. Nearby, Hestercombe House is designated at a European level as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and at a national level as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its maternity colony for lesser horseshoe bats. Hestercombe contains one of the two largest breeding roosts of lesser horseshoe bat in south-west England. The whole of the Hestercombe house site is within the boundary of Natural England's Impact Risk Zone. This though is located approximately 3.1 km to the north-east of the site. The closest statutory designation to the application site boundary is the Silk Mills Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which is located approximately 0.2 km to the south of the site.

The Ecological Survey identifies a number of important species which are likely to be affected by the current proposal and it makes observations and suggests mitigation. This has been checked by both the County Council's ecologist and by the Borough Council's Biodiversity officer and found to be appropriate and accurate. These issues will now be explored in detail.

### Bats.

Bat activity surveys were undertaken in, May and September 2014 and May 2015. No evidence of bats was recorded in the buildings present around Staplegrove farm. The buildings were considered to provide sub optimal roosting opportunities for bats. None of the trees to be felled were considered to be of value for bats. Bat activity was dominated by common pipistrelle with barbastelle, lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe being recorded. A small lesser horseshoe roost was recorded in the village of Staplegrove, but outside of the 'red line' boundary for this application.

Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires a competent authority (*in this case Taunton Deane Borough Council*), before deciding to undertake or give consent for a plan or project which (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (*in this case the Hestercombe House SAC which is designated because of its association with the Lesser Horseshoe Bat*), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, to make an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of its conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority may proceed with or consent to the plan only after having ascertained that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site. In this instance, The County Ecologist has prepared a 'Test of Likely Significant Effect' (TOLSE), for this application, under a Service Level Agreement. The same has been done for the concurrent Staplegrove east application as well. The TOLSE has been sent to Natural England for their comments and they have agreed with this report and

its findings. The mitigation identified as being required has been dealt with as a cohesive whole (that is for both applications). Importantly, there are no insurmountable issues that have been found, provided that the mitigation suggested is applied through conditions or s106 agreements. This means that, subject to the mitigation suggested, there will be no adverse impact upon the integrity of the Hestercombe bat colony.

Natural England has previously advised on the mitigation measures required to ensure that adverse effects on the integrity of Hestercombe House are avoided. Natural England and the County Ecologist and were both satisfied with the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of August 2014, compiled as part of the Council's (then) draft Sites Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). Also, natural England and the County Ecologist have agreed a Statement of Common Ground with the developers and the Council. The County ecologist has now confirmed that the proposals contained in this current outline application are in accordance with the previously agreed plans for the site.

The development will impact on bats through loss of habitat so the mitigation approach has been led by specifications set out within the 2014 HRA for the SADMP and the associated Habitat Evaluation methodology. In line with this document the HRA requires 16.27 ha of replacement habitat to be provided across the whole site, mainly along the northern boundary. The calculations for the amount of 'off-set' planting that will be required has been fine-tuned by the Ecologist at Somerset County Council. The calculations include a time lag calculator so the planting can begin at the start of phase 1. In addition to replacement habitat a purpose built new bat roost will be constructed to the north of the site allocation to support the proposal to incorporate bat boxes into the design of the new houses. This will include the provision of a bat roost structure along the northern boundary of the site (indicative size of a single garage) and a sensitive lighting strategy.

Natural England concludes that the Test of Likely Significance ("Habitats Regulations Assessment") has provided an appropriately detailed and systematic assessment of the proposals in terms of its likely effects on the SAC. They conclude that the proposals, without mitigation, would result in the loss of key foraging areas and commuting routes for horseshoe bats linked to the SAC. On this basis, Natural England agrees with the conclusions in the HRA and supports the need for the avoidance and mitigation measures put forward as conditions in Chapter 6 Section 124 of the HRA to be adopted in full in order to ensure that there is unlikely to be significant effects on the SAC. If these conditions are not secured then it would cast doubt on the ability of the development to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, and Natural England would object on that basis.

Although these matters will primarily be a consideration for the reserved matters stage, Members are recommended to accept that 1) the suggested planting is sufficient to mitigate any impact on the bats (as required by the 2014 Habitats Regulations Assessments and environmental law); and, 2) the provision required must be guaranteed by condition(s) at this outline stage. The required conditions have been placed into the recommendation.

### Dormice.

The dormice survey was carried out on site in 2014. The presence of dormice were recorded on the western boundary of the site and in a number of the hedgerows on the boundaries with the Staplegrove East site. Dormice were also recorded in a number of hedgerows further to the east off site. As dormice have been recorded on site, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence will be required prior to the commencement of the removal of any hedgerows which they inhabit. The Biodiversity officer has asked if the designing of road junctions could be handled sensitively so as to facilitate the dispersal of dormice. This would substantially be a reserved matters consideration.

### Badgers.

A number of badger setts have been recorded on the site and although it is considered best practice to try and retain badger setts in-situ, the extent and location of some of the outlying and subsidiary setts could restrict the development proposals, particularly due to the alignment of the spine road. A number of these setts may therefore require closure under licence.

### Great Crested Newts.

Only one pond was located on the application site but a number of ponds within 500m were surveyed. GCN were recorded in a pond to the north of the spine road and a number of pond to the east of the application site boundary. Requirement for an additional licence for Great crested newts will depend on the proximity of the works to ponds and terrestrial habitat.

### Otters.

No evidence of otters was recorded during the on-site surveys. However, the Back Stream could potentially be used for foraging or commuting. SERC data shows records of otter within 0.4 km of the site, and using Back Stream. This has been verified by the Environment Agency.

### Birds.

A total of 31 species of bird were recorded within the site. No evidence of barn owls (protected species) was found in any of the buildings on site. The development will inevitably result in the loss of foraging and nesting habitat for birds. So the Council's biodiversity officer considers that it is important that all vegetation to be retained should be protected. Other vegetation should only be removed outside of the bird nesting season and vegetation. The Council's biodiversity officer supports the proposal to incorporate bird boxes into the design.

### Lighting.

The application site is presently farmland, with the only light source currently present being associated with a farmhouse and barns. Introducing lighting into an otherwise unlit environment cannot be achieved without impact. From an ecological viewpoint design measures will need to be applied to maintain dark corridors particularly for bats. On the assumption that the development will follow best practice in the control of obtrusive lighting and that the landscaping scheme is successfully established, then it is the view of the Biodiversity Officer that light spill on sensitive habitats can be kept to a minimum. Lighting in connection with the construction phase should be should

be carefully controlled by a Construction Environmental Management plan (CEMP). This can be guaranteed by way of condition. One has been added to the recommendation.

#### Other observations and requirements.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will need to be produced. The CEMP should include measures to manage, mitigate and monitor the main environmental impacts during construction, including light, noise, vibration, emissions to air, dust, litter, traffic, water and drainage, and spillages. This can be controlled by condition.

The development will be phased, which will help to reduce disturbance to local wildlife to a certain extent. This will result in certain areas on the site being unaffected at particular points in time, which will provide safe refuges for the more mobile species and also allow the new habitats to become established.

In order to protect any established vegetation to be retained on the site and in particular the hedgerows and trees, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. New planting will be introduced to the site, and the preference should be for native species of local provenance. However, where this is not possible a suitable alternative would be to use species of known wildlife value.

Whilst there is currently a good understanding of the ecological receptors on site, the submitted ecological surveys will need to be updated as part of any reserved matters submission(s). Any changes in the way that ecological receptors are using the site at the time of those surveys would be picked up and addressed as part of any reserved matters submission. The current application is in outline only and therefore there is flexibility in relation to any ecological/biodiversity feature that could prove to be affected by any element of the reserved matters. Taking account of the flexibility that exists, there are a number of possible mitigation measures available and ultimately which one is selected will be for consideration and approval at the point of the reserved matter(s) submission(s). It should also be taken into account that this outline submission is accompanied by a comprehensive Green Infrastructure that offers and will deliver a enhancements in the form of additional planting across the application site which will be of direct benefit to the protected species present on site. The schedule of conditions recommended includes appropriately worded conditions to control the measures discussed above most notably. As such appropriate means of control exist to the Council and proportionate means of mitigation can be considered holistically at the reserved matters stage which will take appropriate account of the findings of the updated ecological surveys.

Natural England, Somerset County Council and Taunton and Deane Borough Council have all confirmed their support for the approach proposed in the Ecological Survey by signing a Statement of Common Ground.

Specific mitigation has been put forward to minimise impact on the all protected species recorded on the site, as well as a range of generic measures, along with some compensatory and enhancement measures suggested. If these are fully



implemented, the specialist advice Officers have received suggests that the range of habitats found along with the species they support, could be mitigated for. The required measures would need to be worked up into a detailed Ecological Management Plan, to cover the whole site. This can be guaranteed by means of a condition.

Overall the findings of the ecological assessment indicate that there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the development proposals that would preclude outline planning permission from being granted, subject to appropriate mitigation and conditions as suggested.

### **Agriculture.**

In considering this application, Members have a duty to consider the impact of the development upon agriculture and agricultural land. This is spelled out in legislation and has also become a common theme amongst those who have objected to the proposals.

The Government's Soil Strategy for England (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2009) - Soil Strategy for England, Safeguarding Our Soils) seeks to encourage the sustainable management of soil resources. The Strategy sets out Defra's vision that by 2030 all of England's soils will be managed sustainably and degradation threats will be tackled successfully in order to improve soil quality and safeguard the ability to provide essential services for future generations.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that the planning system should protect and enhance valued soils because they are an essential finite resource that provides important ecosystem services, such as a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution (PPG Reference ID: 8-025-20140306).

Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the protection and enhancement of soils as a priority in the conservation and enhancement of the natural and local environment. Paragraph 112 then advises that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, that is, land classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system of England and Wales. Paragraph 112 goes on to advise that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

There are no policies for development involving agricultural land in the adopted Core Strategy although Policy DM1 states that proposals for development will be required to make the most effective and efficient use of land, and Policy DM5(j) indicates that development proposals shall make the maximum possible use within the development site of ..... spare soil generated by the site preparation.

Guidance for assessing the quality of agricultural land in England and Wales is set out in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for the grading of the quality of

agricultural land” (1988), which is still relevant today but has been updated by Natural England (‘Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land. Technical Information Note [TIN] 049’ of 2012). Accordingly, agricultural land in England and Wales is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use, and Grade 5 is very poor quality land, with severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief, climate or a combination of these. Grade 3 land is subdivided into Subgrade 3a (good quality land) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality land). Land which is classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the ALC system is defined as best and most versatile agricultural land.

The agricultural land within the application site would be lost from agricultural production to the proposed development and this change of use will occur throughout the construction phase. There are several farm holdings within the application site. Smokey Farm lies to the north and occupies approximately 215 hectare. The farm is a mainly dairy farm of over 200 milking cows with beef cattle also finished, and is mostly laid to grass with some maize and wheat also grown. The western part of the Application Site forms part of Staplegrove Mills which is a 33 hectare grassland holding let out to a tenant based some 20 miles away for cattle and sheep grazing. The farm buildings and some land are also rented out as a holding area for an abattoir based at Staplegrove Mills. Staplegrove Farm is adjacent to Staplegrove Mills and extends to approximately 4 hectares of permanent grassland. Land to the west of Whitmore Lane is owned and occupied by the Staplegrove Farm Partnership and extends to approximately 4.7 hectares. This particular farmland is partly within both application sites. An area of land to the east of Taunton Road is owned by the National Trust and rented by Pyrland Farm which is a dairy farm of over 150 hectares, a herd of 250 milking cows, and general cropping enterprise which includes growing potatoes. This is entirely covered by the Staplegrove east application.

This proposal together with the Staplegrove east application, will result in the loss of approximately 77 hectares of Best and Most Versatile Land in Grades 2 and 3a (42 hectares for Staplegrove west by itself), which is considered to be significant. The Environmental Statement identifies that there are no effective means of mitigating the direct loss of agricultural land and so the proposed development would result in an adverse effect on the ‘Best and Most Versatile agricultural Land’. The principal direct effect on the farm holdings as a result of the proposed development will be the loss of available farmland. Mitigation measures for the impacts on farm holdings are primarily private matters not within the control of the proposed development. They relate to the replacement, if required, of lost land and assets. It is known that the farm holding that is primarily affected by Staplegrove West has already purchased replacement land in order that the farm enterprise can continue to operate at its current levels and maintain its existing workforce.

Natural England has a statutory role in advising local planning authorities about agricultural land quality issues. It is noted in this instance that the detailed comments received from Natural England about this application made no reference to the Agricultural Land Classification or the quality of the land proposed for use. It is also noted that this, was all known before the land was proposed for development within the Core Strategy and formally allocated within the SADMP. The main difficulty is that

Taunton is entirely surrounded by 'Best and Most Versatile Land' (as defined) and expansion of the town will inevitably affect this land. This has been considered as part of the evidence base and within the sustainability appraisals for both the Core Strategy and the SADMP. In documents such as 'The Taunton Urban Extension Study' (Terence O'Rourke, November 2004) and 'The Taunton Sub-Area Study' (Baker Associates, October 2005), it has been concluded that the need to meet the housing targets in the plan outweighed the need to preserve the 'Best and Most versatile Land'. This was clearly also considered by the Inspectors who examined the Core Strategy and the SADMP.

Given this and the lack of objection on these grounds from Natural England, officer's advice to Members is that the proposal should not be refused permission on the grounds of the loss of some 'Best and Most Versatile Land' and of some farm holdings.

### **Social dimensions.**

#### **(a) Local centre**

A new mixed-use local centre is proposed at the intersection of the spine road with Kingston Road to serve the new communities at both Staplegrove west and east. This is in accordance with policy TAU2 of the adopted SADMP (bullet point 3), which specifies that the masterplan and phasing strategy should include the following - "A new mixed-use local centre at the intersection of radial and orbital routes adjacent to Kingston Road". This position was chosen, rather than one more central within the overall urban extension, because the need is for the local centre to serve a wider catchment area in the north of Taunton and not just the new urban extension. The chosen location will have much better accessibility by all modes of transport to this wider catchment area and therefore it will also be likely to have a greater chance of economic success in the longer term.

Thus the mixed-use centre is proposed to be provided on the Staplegrove east site, in order to meet the requirements of policy TAU2. This is a matter of common ground between the two applicants. The highway network and cycle/pedestrian links have been designed to ensure maximum accessibility from the West site to the new centre.

The policy asks that the new store should comprise a convenience store (A1) of up to 500 m<sup>2</sup> (gross); 500 m<sup>2</sup> of other convenience retailing (A1), financial/professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3); at least one public house (A4), take-away (Class A5) and a community hall building (comprising of main hall, storage, kitchen, toilets) and associated parking, together with 0.25ha of land for a place of worship. Residential or office uses should be provided on upper floors. Whilst the outline application for the concurrent Staplegrove east application does incorporate the provision of a local centre, it is currently unclear, from the supporting documentation, whether the proposed local centre will meet the policy requirements for the mix of uses proposed in Policy TAU2. The eastern application proposes a mixed use area of up to 1.6 hectares as the key location for activity. The applicant for the east site has identified that it is important for the local centre to complement, rather than compete with existing town centre retail facilities and to this end it will need to provide a range of small-scale facilities within convenient walking distance of the new homes. The Environmental Statement assumes the following maximum gross internal floor space areas within the local centre:-

- Up to 1,000 m2 of A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 Use Classes;
- Up to 500 m2 of B1 Use Class;
- Up to 250 m2 of D1 Use Class.

It is anticipated that a range of facilities could include a local food store with a gross internal floor space of 500 m2, other retail with a gross internal floor space of up to 500m2, office (on upper floors) and multi-functional community uses. Uses within this range are considered to be appropriate for a truly local centre and would not adversely compete with existing town centre facilities.

However, although the Staplegrove east application seeks to establish the principle of a mixed use local centre, the exact composition will be reserved for later consideration by the Local Planning Authority. Further details will need to be provided as part of any reserved matters application to ensure the local centre provides what is envisaged in the policy. This will be covered by a condition which will ensure delivery of the local centre in accordance with a detailed design brief that will have been previously negotiated and agreed.

It is clear that the new local centre needs to be handled sensitively given the many functions and activities it will host. The applicants have agreed to the suggestion of a design brief to handle all aspects of the local centre, with a view to providing an excellent, well planned environment at this point that would be pedestrian friendly, have a strong economic viability, a pedestrian friendly and human scale environment, and an attractive, prosperous and pleasant environment. The design brief would be required by condition before any work took place on this phase of the development.

#### (b) Employment

In addition to the construction jobs, and those within the new local centre, a significant number of jobs will also be generated by this application (Staplegrove west) through the provision of 1 hectares of employment land (2 ha of employment land including Staplegrove East). It is not possible at this stage to ascertain exactly how many jobs will be created as this will be dependent on the occupier that eventually takes up the space. However, the application does make clear the following provision –

- 1ha of land would be set aside for flexible employment-generating uses (use classes B1, B2, B8).
- The employment site would include landscaping and parking and would be accessed from the spine road towards the western entry in to the site.
- The Environmental Statement assumes a maximum gross floorspace of up to 6,666sqm over two storeys within the employment area.

The scheme proposes employment land directly west of the West Deane Way. The site would be suitable for a mix of B1(b), B1(c), B2 and B8 employment uses. As shown in the masterplan, buildings will front onto the Spine Road, with suitable access gained directly off this route. Parking and servicing would be from a rear courtyard.

The applicants calculations demonstrate that a net additional employment figure of 327 (worst case scenario) to 805 (best case scenario) jobs would be generated by this proposal. This provision of an additional 327 to 805 job opportunities is considered to have a moderate beneficial effect on employment in the area.

(c) Healthcare

As one of its Strategic Objectives, the Core Strategy aims to reduce health inequalities and improve access to services and facilities. The focus is on creating the right environment to promote wellbeing by providing the means for a healthy lifestyle. The following facilities exist within close proximity to the application site: Primary Care - There are 9 GP Surgeries within 5 km of the Application Site. Five of these are currently accepting new patients.

Secondary Care - There are approximately 6 hospitals with 16km (10 miles) of the application site providing a number of services. The nearest Accident and Emergency department is at Musgrove Park Hospital, which is part of the Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and is the main provider of hospital services to the population of western Somerset. The Musgrove Park Hospital is 2.6 miles from the application site.

It will be noted from the consultation comments above that the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group has concerns regarding the impact of this proposed development on the local National Health Services. NHS England (south, south-west) confirms that the current NHS funded services in Taunton are sufficient only for the current population with no additional capacity available to cater for the proposed increase in population to be generated by this application. It is true that the new homes in Staplegrove will generate a significant number of new residents, all of whom will require access to Primary Care Services in the area, including GP services. However, these will not be new people to the NHS, but will be people already registered within the NHS and relocating from elsewhere in Taunton or beyond. NHS England has a duty to commission local healthcare services to meet the expected needs of the population of Somerset including the demands of the additional population of the new developments. At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset.

The NHS England (south, south west team) estimates that 1500 new houses in Staplegrove would result in approximately 3,600 new residents. This equates to approximately an additional 2.12 G.P.s required to provide sufficient capacity for the new residents. Their position is that there are several practices in the area with 3 practices within 2km of the site. However, based on an analysis of the number of GPs at these practices and space available there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers of new patients expected. The current premises are considered to be the main limitation to accepting the additional new residents. They are apparently currently struggling for the space needed to provide services to meet the NHS General Practice Forward View. The results of assessment indicate there is no local capacity that is accessible and therefore addition of the new residents in Taunton and specifically at Staplegrove will require additional capacity.

NHS England (south, south west team) have endorsed the need for healthcare facilities to be provided at the outset of the construction phase because in their opinion it is important that there are healthcare facilities available before residents occupy their houses. Given there is no capacity in neighbouring practices, NHS England maintain that they would be unable to fulfil their statutory duties without further interim provision of local healthcare services during the development process.

The NHS England (south, south-west team) and Somerset CCG have requested contributions to enable the construction of extension space for 1083sqm facility for General Practice and 1.5 dentists, with retail space available for optometrist and pharmacy outlets. They have specifically asked for a financial contribution to an extension at the nearest surgery (Lyngford Park), costed at £ 669,600 incl VAT and fees, together with a 1.5 dentist surgery/extension of 60 sqm with a budget cost of £172,800. This funding will be required at the outset of the development to ensure adequate capacity can be developed and planned to a total of £ 842,400 (incl VAT), but excluding land.

This is a considerable sum of money that has been requested in order to ensure the kinds of health services at a local scale that a new community of this size would need. Caselaw implies that this type of infrastructure should not be funded through s106 monies. Whilst healthcare does not specifically appear on the Council's regulation 123 (CIL) list, healthcare funding could still theoretically be delivered through CIL, although in light of the many demands on CIL funding, it is officers' opinion that it is highly unlikely that this will be the case.

#### (d) Education

Policy TAU2 of the Taunton Deane adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan requires only the provision of a primary school to serve the new urban extension at Staplegrave, although it also identifies that it should have pre-school facilities.

The yield of primary school places from new housing development is usually calculated on the basis of 30 places per 150 dwellings. On this basis, the Staplegrave west development (in isolation) would lead to a need for 143 additional primary school places in the local area. Due to the oversubscription of existing primary schools in the area, these figures for primary education are larger than the number of surplus places at the combined nearest primary schools. Primary age pupils could not reasonably be expected to attend other existing schools further afield although given the current situation the exercise of parental choice may have the effect of children travelling greater distances. However, it is clear that the proposal requires the provision of a new primary school and this is recognised by the policy requirements of Core Strategy policy SS6 and particularly the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan policy TAU2.

The County Education Authority (CEA) has identified the need for a 14 class 2 form intake primary school to serve the new urban extension. This is reflected in the policy requirements. The school required to serve the new community is proposed within the concurrent application for Staplegrave east, although clearly it would serve both the east and west applications. Providing that the Staplegrave east development comes forward at the same time as Staplegrave west, a one form entry primary school (with the capacity to expand to two form entry) with 'early years' provision is proposed to be delivered as part of the overall masterplan. This will generate approximately 210 additional primary school places (with the capacity to expand to 420 places) which will accommodate additional demand generated by the development. This is considered to be in line with policy TAU2 of the adopted SADMP. The CEA is satisfied with the site reserved for the school in as much as it is relatively flat, can be satisfactorily serviced and is located far enough away from other primary schools.

The main difficulty perceived by the CEA relates to the need to access the site early in the development process in order to deliver the school. It is estimated that the school will be required within 2 years from the start of the development. However, the spine road is unlikely to be built as far as the school site within this time frame and so access is a concern. This, together with the required land transfer process will need to be resolved during the negotiations of the legal agreement. The land will need to be transferred to the County Council at the start of the development or as soon as possible thereafter. The applicant's and the CEA are currently exploring the possibility of providing a school under the Government's 'free school' programme. This would reduce the financial burden on the CIL fund. It is not clear yet whether this has a reasonable prospect of success, however, the CEA is fully aware that it will be obliged to build a school if not, even if CIL monies are not guaranteed to fund the cost. Officers are currently working closely with Somerset County Council and the applicants to ensure a primary school is delivered on site.

In Taunton, according to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (latest edition, 2014) there is currently spare secondary school capacity. Although Heathfield Community School is oversubscribed, there is limited capacity at the Bishop Fox's School, but most of the current capacity is at Taunton Academy, which is a reasonable distance to the application site. The IDP maintains that Taunton will require a new 7-form entry secondary school towards the end of the local plan period, although this is currently being revised to take account of a recent unexpected growth in birth rates. It is now considered that a new school is likely to be required by 2023/24 (or equivalent additional capacity). Nevertheless, it is clear that the Staplegrove urban extension (either application or both) will not generate the need for a new secondary school by itself.

(e) Community hall.

Community Centres in proximity to the site include Priorswood Community Centre (1.8 miles); Frank Bond Community Centre (1.7 miles); and The Albemarle Centre (1.7 miles). However, policy TAU2 (bullet point 3) requires the provision of a community hall building as part of the urban extension proposals. Such a community hall is currently proposed within the local centre, which is within the Staplegrove east application site boundary. Clearly it is intended to serve both application sites. The s106 legal agreement will need to have provisions in place for the delivery of such a community hall if the Staplegrove east proposal does not come forward.

(f) Sports pitches, play areas, allotments and other areas of open space.

TDBC's Green Space Strategy sets out the assessments of current provision of green spaces, play spaces, allotment and outdoor sports facilities across Taunton Deane. The strategy identifies that Staplegrove will need to accommodate an additional 8.47ha of open space by 2026 to meet new demands from future development.

In terms of public open space, children's play and leisure, the proposals for Staplegrove west incorporate 11.09ha of public open space including;

- four equipped areas of childrens play located across the site (0.43ha);
- formal parks and green space (2.96ha)
- amenity open space (2.98ha)
- parks/natural space (2.91ha)

·active recreation spaces - sports pitches (1.28ha) ·allotments (0.53ha)

The provision of a new Youth sized 3G playing pitch is proposed in the south east of the site, adjacent to the existing sports pitch beyond the boundary. The overall pitch size will allow for earth modelling of an area around the pitch to respond to the site's topography. Children and Youth play / activity areas are distributed along the northern open spaces, and alongside the playing field and landscape areas at either end of the site.

Two areas of new allotments are proposed for new or existing residents. One area is west of Whitmore Lane and the second is north of Manor Road, adjacent to The Grove.

Two pocket parks are indicated in the masterplan located along the northern boundary. They would provide areas of open space with long views to the Quantock Hills to the north and would link into the strip of landscape running along the site's northern boundary. The housing around both the parks would be orientated to overlook the areas. The West Deane Way runs through Rag Hill Pocket Park on its eastern edge.

The play equipment for the equipped children and youth play areas together with the proposed new sports facilities, the allotments and other areas of open space would be appropriately maintained over time either by a private management company or by the Council. Depending on management arrangements, if required, an appropriate contribution would be made towards the Council's ongoing maintenance costs.

The Council's Community Leisure Officer and the Open Spaces Manager have made clear that this proposal will need to provide 7.2 hectares of equipped public playing fields and 2.46 hectares of allotment space. The current proposal does not seem to be meeting this requirement. Officer's preferred management strategy is that these facilities should be offered to the Parish Council first, with the Borough Council taking ownership and responsibility if the Parish decline. The Council's position has always been that the use of a management company to oversee the provision and maintenance of such facilities should be a last resort, although this is known to be the applicants' preferred way of dealing with the issue. As was agreed by Members when considering the south-west Taunton urban extension at Comeytrove, Officers recommend that this issue is left to be resolved by Officers as part of their negotiations on the legal agreement. The amount of individual open space and the method of provision and maintenance is a matter that is considered best dealt with as part of the s106 negotiations, because Members are not being asked to approving specific locations and amounts at this stage. The only requirement is to be sure that the Council's adopted requirements can be met. Officers are confident that it can, but as usual have built in the proviso that the matter should be reported back to Members if any part of the required legal agreement cannot be satisfactorily resolved and the obligations cannot be agreed.

### **Public Health issues.**

Health in relation to design is more than just providing doctor's surgeries. It is about accessibility, getting people away from private cars, cycle routes, recreational



provision and opportunities, allotments, desire lines, legibility, community facilities, community interaction – in fact placemaking. All major planning applications should be looking at these issues because communities work better when people are happy and people are happy when they are healthy, so healthy people lead to good communities, and good communities arise out of good town planning. Let us not forget that planning as we know it today evolved out of the mid to late nineteenth century health and welfare acts anyway.

The NHS structure within England changed on the 1 April 2013 with the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). This change principally created the NHS Commissioning Board, known as NHS England, replacing the Primary Care Commissioning function previously undertaken by the Somerset Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset). At a local level, Public Health now sits within Somerset County Council which leads on the health and wellbeing agenda, focusing on the promotion of prevention and the reduction of health inequalities, through partnership working and commissioning across the council areas of Somerset. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Public health has been identified as being something which needs to be considered in all planning documents - there needs to be a reference to public health outcomes. At about the same time, Public Health as a profession was removed from the NHS and placed within the jurisdiction of the Local Authorities. In this case, Somerset County Council. In dealing with the Staplegrove proposals, Officers have been greatly assisted by the Public Health officer at the County Council, who considers his role as being to investigate how the health of the proposed new community could be improved through good town planning. This is particularly important to the Borough Council now because the bid for Garden Town status was very much predicated on the health and well-being agenda, with an emphasis on trying to create greener more liveable communities.

The Director of Public Health is keen to ensure that urban extensions to Taunton and other communities are designed and constructed so as to maximise public health gain for both the new and existing communities. In aiming to achieve this, he maintains it is vital that the principles of sustainability required by national planning guidance are applied so that residents are enabled to live healthily and so that the healthier choices are the obvious choices. As this is only an outline application, this process will inevitably be somewhat constrained, because most of the key public health initiatives will be relevant only at the detailed design stage of any subsequent reserved matters applications.

The Director of Public Health has identified a number of concerns with this proposed development at the outline stage. Firstly, there is concern about the transport assessments and the implications for travel choices to and from the development to trip generators elsewhere in the town. It is pointed out that national and local planning guidance requires sustainable travel modes to be prioritised. It is also noted that public health guidance issued by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NIHCE), which is endorsed by the Department for Transport DfT, advises that walking and cycling should be prioritised.

The Director of Public Health has strong concerns that the transport infrastructure from the development to Taunton railway station is inadequate for cycling, meaning that very few new residents would be willing to consider cycling to the station or on to

other parts of the town. Without much improved infrastructure on the routes into the station and town centre, a useable network will not exist.

The Director of Public Health also notes that there is no proposal to upgrade the substandard cycletrack to Gipsy Lane from Corkscrew Lane which provides access to the sports club and Taunton School. This is a much more direct route than doing so by car from the development site. The Highway Authority have noted this point and are negotiating improvements that will be guaranteed through the legal agreement under s106.

The Director of Public Health also has concerns about the consideration of travel to secondary school. The nearest school is Taunton Academy, but the road route along Hope Corner Lane narrows to single vehicle width. The Hope Corner lane junction has been highlighted as one of the off-site junction improvements that will be required. This should address these concerns and be guaranteed in the legal agreement.

In summary, the Director of Public Health concludes that there are three important issues.

- Unless this development (and the east equivalent) is implemented on the basis of travel planning and implementation which is much more ambitious in terms of modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport, on and off the development site, it is likely that this will become a new car-dependent suburb of the town, with consequential impacts on public health arising from inadequate everyday physical activity in the population.
- All car traffic from this development will funnel into the existing highway network. Therefore, minimising the scale of that traffic by prioritising all other modes will be essential to avoid worsening congestion at peak periods.
- The proposed onsite cycling infrastructure does not meet best modern standards, and there are no proposals to address substandard connections off site to enable new residents to be and feel safe in undertaking utility cycling trips.

The concerns at this stage relate mainly to highway infrastructure and so have been passed on to the Highway Authority. They have been addressed where possible at this stage, with promises that all of the other more detailed concerns will be addressed at the reserved matters stages. It is not therefore considered that there are any insurmountable issues raised by the Director of Public Health that would indicate that the proposal is unacceptable.

### **Affordable housing (and viability).**

Policy CP4 of the adopted Core Strategy (September 2012) outlines the Council's requirements for affordable housing provision. The adopted 'Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document' (May 2014) takes this forward and makes clear that 25% of all new housing should be in the form of affordable units. The SPD specifies that the Council will seek a tenure split of 60% social rented housing and 40% intermediate housing or affordable rented, with the unit types reflecting the mix of the overall development. This is the adopted requirement of the Council.

In response to this, the planning application was submitted making clear that it '*aimed to deliver up to 25% of the total 713 dwellings as affordable housing (178 units)*'. This was noted by the application as being in line with the guidance within the SPD. The application as originally submitted states that the affordable units will be provided on site and integrated within the development in order to promote social cohesion, and that subject to further discussions with the Council, the size and tenure of homes will aim to reflect the overall development and respond to identified local needs.

In July last year, the applicant wrote to the Council claiming that the site had a number of constraints and abnormal costs that contributed to it not being a typical development site and which has impacted upon the sites viability. The constraints identified by the applicant are as follows –

Topography and site dimensions - The applicant states that the site is not flat and in several locations can be extreme. In the opinion of the applicant, these level changes add significant costs to site preparation and construction costs. Additionally, it is claimed that the general shape of the site does not lend itself to an efficient use of the land, with only approximately 50% of the total site being developed for housing.

Pylons - The applicant points out that there are two high voltage lines that stretch from the south-west corner of the site across to the north-east corner. The applicant maintains that the proposal to underground these power lines is an infrastructure cost to the delivery of the site.

Spine road - The applicant maintains that the early delivery of such a large piece of infrastructure will affect the site's cash flow impacting on the overall viability of the scheme.

The Council's Affordable Housing SPD makes clear that when assessing proposals, the Council will have regard to the economics of provision. It states that where it is claimed that full or partial delivery of the affordable housing as required by policy CP4 is not possible on viability grounds, the Council will in the first instance consider a revised tenure split and unit types for the development. In the event that this cannot resolve the viability issues, the applicant will be expected to submit a viability statement to include detailed calculations and submissions to enable an assessment of viability to be carried out. The SPD makes clear that such an approach would need to be independently assessed using an independent assessor preferred by the Council with the applicant expected to meet any costs.

This process has been followed for this application. The applicant has submitted a viability appraisal and this has been independently assessed on behalf of the Council by 'Three Dragons'. The findings have enabled officers to agree on the amount and nature of the costs involved with the application proposals, particularly in respect of affordable housing. The extent and results of these discussions are covered in the section below (viability).

### **Viability (and affordable housing).**

In line with other development in Taunton Deane, policy requires that development at TAU2 Staplegrove should seek to provide 25% affordable housing, subject to viability, in accordance with Local Plan Policy CP4: Housing.

As part of the outline planning application process in 2016, the applicants for Staplegrove East and Staplegrove West submitted viability appraisals to support the proposition that development in this location could only support 10% affordable housing. This proposition was based upon detailed cost plans (outlining the costs of infrastructure such as the new road and removal of overhead powerlines, preparation of the site for development and costs to build the scheme) for both application sites. Given that the proposal would not meet the affordable housing policy, these assessments have been independently scrutinised by experts appointed by the Council.

The outcome of this process was that the applicants' offer is revised to 15% affordable housing across the overall site, at a 60% rented and 40% shared ownership tenure split. This takes account of the various on-site and offsite costs that the development is required to provide, including the early provision of the primary access road running from Staplegrove Road to Taunton Road. It is important to note that the 15% offer is subject to future reviews on viability as is normal for schemes of this size and can be guaranteed through the legal agreement under s106. Therefore 15% should be considered as a minimum to be achieved on this site.

One factor that may trigger such a review and increase the level of affordable housing is through the bidding for government funds. The Government has recently launched the Housing Infrastructure Fund, which includes the Marginal Viability and Forward Funding programmes. A bid for funding for the Staplegrove primary access road is being prepared in time for the Marginal Viability fund deadline of 28th September 2017. Funding for the road will reduce the risk to development on the overall site and is anticipated to assist the early provision of the school as well as speeding housing delivery.

A key factor for increasing the chances of funding under this programme is that the site is close to delivering housing, and part of this will be achieving planning consent. If this bid is successful, then it is anticipated that the affordable housing provision could be increased up to 25% across the site. The decisions on which schemes will receive Marginal Viability funding are expected to be announced as part of the 2017 Autumn Statement.

### **Phasing**

The proposed phasing strategy for the development sets out three phases of development. The strategy submitted sets out a co-ordinated procedure which brings forward open space, play spaces and attenuation with the housing development. A more detailed phasing strategy will need to be developed as part of any subsequent reserved matters application(s). However, the applicant envisages the following general phases -

Phase 1 - The first phase of development is divided into two parts. Phase 1a will seek to provide around 200 dwelling units. This phase will also include the northern buffer and bat mitigation planting to allow for maturity of the trees to take place. Delivery of the sports pitch will also occur. Temporary access will be provided from Corkscrew Lane to access phase 1a. Phase 1b provides around 50 additional dwelling units and associated infrastructure. The entirety of the Spine Road is also to be completed (by the 250th dwelling). A temporary drainage channel will be installed linking to existing field ditches to attenuate the Spine Road. At this time Rectory Road and Whitmore Lane southbound will be stopped up, as well as the temporary access road, preventing unwanted vehicular short cuts. Phase 1b will be served from the new Silk Mills signalled junction.

Phase 2 - Development during phase 2 will include completion of the employment area on the western side of the site and around 302 dwelling units. Phase 2 development is split into land at Staplegrove Farm which equates to about 87 dwellings and the remaining land west of Rectory Road which will provide about 215 dwellings. The western area of allotments will also be established during this phase of development. By the start of Phase 2, the powerlines will also have been removed and grounded along the northern periphery corridor (subject to confirmation by, and negotiations with, Western Power Distribution, who own the powerlines).

Phase 3 - Phase 3 will see the completion of the development, with around 161

dwelling units being completed. This will include the Rectory Road green corridor and associated infrastructure. The eastern area of allotments within the green wedge will also be established during this phase.

No timelines have as yet been established for the phases, although the newly adopted SADMP does set a target within policy TAU2 of 500 new dwellings at Staplegrove by 2022 and 1,000 further new dwellings by the end of the plan period (2028). This of course also takes into account the dwellings that would be provided by the concurrent Staplegrove east application. It is possible that some of the phases may run in parallel to each other, but this is not seen as a problem. The Government in its recent Housing White Paper (February 2017) gave a clear indication that it wanted homes built faster with a speed up in delivery rates and potential sanctions if these rates are not met.

### **Planning Obligations and Infrastructure delivery.**

The three tests set out in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 require S.106 agreements to be:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) directly related to the development; and
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

Regulation 123 of CIL Regulations states that a planning obligation may not constitute a reason for granting planning permission where the obligation provides for the funding or provision of an infrastructure project or type of infrastructure and five or more separate planning obligations for the funding or provision of that project or type of infrastructure have been entered into. Policy TAU2 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan outlines specific infrastructure requirements in order to create a sustainable community. These have already been considered

elsewhere in this report. The items listed at the start of this report are considered to be required to mitigate the impact of the development and to make the application acceptable in planning terms.

There have been on-going discussions with the developers and Somerset County Council (as the Education and Highways authorities) to agree the timely delivery of infrastructure required to support the development. Discussions have also taken place with relevant officers within Taunton Deane Borough Council. Appendix one details the identified infrastructure needs arising from the development and the possible funding mechanism for delivery (i.e. s106 and CIL). As part of the amended CIL Regulations developers are able to deliver infrastructure items through Payment in Kind (Regulation 73A) and off-set this infrastructure payment against their CIL liability.

The proposed development is likely to generate between £3.3m and £3.9m in CIL receipts over the lifetime of the development. CIL receipts are used for strategic infrastructure requirements other than those which are necessary to make the scheme work and hence acceptable. Necessary works are the responsibility of the developer, whereas CIL items will be funded from the Council's received CIL monies. The CIL Regulations, as amended (Reg 59A), requires Taunton Deane as the charging authority to pass 25% of the CIL receipts to a relevant parish council with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan and 15% in the absence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. For the maximum amount to be due (25%), the Neighbourhood Plan has to have passed through its examination, had a positive result from its referendum and been adopted formally by the Borough Council. In the case of this application, these steps would need to have been completed before the submission of a reserved matters application, otherwise the amount due to the Parish Council would be 15%. The amount due to the Parish Council may change over the course of the reserved matters applications, as they are likely to be the subject of phased submissions.

The Education Authority has confirmed that the development in itself does not trigger the need for a new secondary school. The Education Authority have confirmed that at present there are sufficient secondary school places in Taunton to accommodate the secondary school places generated by the development. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2014) highlights the need for a new 7-form entry secondary school towards the end of the (Core Strategy) plan period. The provision of CIL funding to support the delivery of the new secondary school will need to be considered by the Council based upon its CIL governance arrangements.

As confirmed earlier in this report NHS (England) have asked for a considerable sum of money to fund new healthcare practices to serve the new development. Officers consider that the request is not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, it is not directly or fairly related to the development, it is not fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, and is likely to fall foul of the requirements not to have more than five contributions pooling towards a provision. Caselaw implies that it should not be funded through s106 monies. Whilst healthcare does not specifically appear on the Council's regulation 123 (CIL) list, healthcare funding could still theoretically be delivered through CIL, although in light of the many demands on CIL funding, it is officer's opinion that it is highly unlikely that this will be the case.

Appendix one attached gives officer's opinion on how the infrastructure works could be funded. The list of required infrastructure is accurate and reflects the requirements of the various consultees on this application. However, the detail will still need to be confirmed and ratified in a legal agreement. It is recommended that the detailed requirements of the s106 obligations should be delegated to the Assistant Director to resolve under delegated powers in consultation with the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. In the event that agreement cannot be reached, the application would be referred back to the Planning Committee for their further consideration.

The Estimated CIL receipts for both Staplegrove west and east, over the lifetime of the project, and not including any retail element, would be in the order of between £8.6 million and £10.1 million (approx.).

### **Conclusions.**

The starting point for the determination of this application is the development plan. The site is allocated in the development plan and so the provisions for applying a presumption in favour of sustainable development in decision-taking, as set out in paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, apply in this case. The current proposal meets the tests imposed on the allocation which are outlined in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

There is a strong national commitment to economic growth and housing delivery. The potential economic and social benefits of the proposal would contribute significantly to these national objectives and are an important material consideration.

The points of entry into the site are to be determined at the outline stage. Following a redesign of the access/egress onto Kingston Road, the applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that they work. The traffic impact of the proposal is now considered to be acceptable following agreed measures of mitigation and subject to the terms suggested for the legal agreement under s106 of the Act and conditions as advocated. It has been demonstrated that the additional traffic from the development would not have a severe impact on the free flow of traffic within the village of Staplegrove and this is a considerable factor that indicates approval can be given. It is noted that on these grounds, there is not now any substantive objection to the technical highway engineering detail by either the County Highway Authority or Highways England.

The relationship with the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is important and the concerns raised by the AONB Service have been taken into account. However, these are largely issues of strategic impact and these were considered at the public examinations into both the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. Matters of detail in respect of potential impact can be appropriately considered at the reserved matters stage and are considered to be capable of resolution. Therefore, it is not considered to be appropriate to withhold permission on this basis. It is noted that the proposed Green Wedge is of a different size from that mooted in previous studies as part of the development planning process. However, the reduction in some of its width is compensated for by a further extension northwards and it is not felt that this in any way compromises the overall aim of the Green wedge policy.

In terms of flood risk, the proposal complies with the requirements of the NPPF, local planning policy and the requirements of the Lead Local Flood Authority. Any potential flood risk can be mitigated.

There are no substantial heritage or conservation issues, although it is recognised that some care will be required when the reserved matters and conditions are considered.

All of the potential nature conservation and biodiversity issues have been demonstrated to be mitigated, including the internationally important bat colonies and roosts at Hestercombe. Mitigation planting is proposed, both on and off-site to assist in this regard.

The social dimensions considered in this report are all shown to be in place and deliverable. As part of this, the concurrent application proposes the creation of a primary school, which if fully developed, is understood to provide additional school capacity beyond that which is generated by this and the concurrent Staplegrove east developments. The application would secure large amounts of open space, and while this is primarily required to mitigate the impact of development it would have wider public benefits. Accordingly, this should be given moderate weight in favour of the grant of planning permission. The development would generate economic benefits both during construction and post occupation. This would include job creation and an increase in potential expenditure in the area on goods and services. These economic benefits should also be given considerable weight. These factors can be guaranteed through the legal agreement under s106 of the Act. Those elements which fall under the jurisdiction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arrangements, will fall to be considered by the Council in due course.

Issues highlighted by the Director of Public Health have informed the proposals and formed a very useful tool for negotiating and shaping the scheme. However, many of these issues will have more relevance and fall to be considered at the more detailed reserved matters stages.

The proposed development will deliver a significant proportion of the market and affordable housing that is likely to be required to meet Taunton's housing need. The benefits of the housing should be given significant weight in the determination of this application. However, the benefits of the delivery of the affordable housing is somewhat mitigated reduced due to the viability considerations which arise as a result of the costs of the infrastructure mitigation. The site does, however, have the potential to deliver housing within the next 5 years, subject to additional consents, and the early delivery of the housing also attracts considerable weight in favour of a grant of planning permission.

The development would result in the loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and this should be given moderate weight in any decision. The development would also give rise to some material harm to the rural character and appearance of the area and this should also be given moderate weight. However, it is a fact that Taunton is surrounded by best and most versatile agricultural land and there are few options for growth that would not impact in some way. In any event, it



is considered that these harms are more than outweighed by the benefit of the provision of needed housing.

There are a range of benefits to be gained from this development, not least the early delivery of much needed housing. There are no material considerations that would, either separately or in combination, outweigh this benefit brought by this proposal. Therefore it is considered to be justifiable to recommend the granting of planning permission, but subject to the conditions, informatives and legal agreement referenced at the beginning of this report.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Contact Officer: Mr J Burton**

# Appendix 1 -

## Draft Infrastructure Schedule - Staplegrove West

Item	Normal Development Cost	CIL	Section 106	Comments
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Primary School (including Early Years preschool)		X		Application being submitted for a Free School
Secondary Education		X		
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
<b><u>ON-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS</u></b>				
Spine Road	X			
Bus stops	X			
Pedestrian Cycle routes	X			
Travel plan			X	
<b><u>OFF-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS</u></b>				
Silk Mills junction improvements			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Cross Keys signalised junction			X	
Corkscrew Lane / Hope Corner Lane / Kingston Road junction signalisation			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Improvements to Kingston Road Gyratory (Cheddon Road/Priorswood Road/St Andrews Road/Kingston Road/Greenway Road/Station Road/Station Approach)			X	
Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane management works and speed reduction measures.			X	
Increased level of bus services			X	
Improved connecting cycle routes			X	A requirement of Highways England. Still being negotiated.
MOVA at Junction 25			X	
Manor Road / Staplegrove Road signals (SCOOT)			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
Improvements to pedestrian links to Taunton Academy			X	
Improvements to Gypsy Lane cycle route			X	Still a measure of disagreement between the applicant and the County Highway Authority as to whether this work is specifically required for this development (s106) or not (CIL).
<b>OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE</b>				
	X			

<b><u>ON-SITE</u></b>				
Green Infrastructure				
Allotments		X		Provided on-site
Northern Green Corridor	X			
One Junior sports pitch		X		Provided on-site
<b><u>OFF-SITE</u></b>				
Active Recreation Spaces - Sports Pitches		X		Contribution to East-site who are delivering pitches
Northern tree belts (habitat replacement planting for bats )	X			Provided on-site - secured via planning condition
<b>SOCIAL &amp; COMMUNITY</b>				
<b><u>ON-SITE</u></b>				
Affordable Housing			X	Provided on-site
<b><u>OFF-SITE</u></b>				
Community Hall Building		X		Contribution to East-site
Health		X		
Libraries		X		
Arts and Culture		X		
<b>PLAY EQUIPMENT AND SPORTS FACILITIES</b>				
<b><u>ON-SITE</u></b>				
LAPs			X	Provided on-site
LEAPS			X	Provided on-site
Play Equipment Maintenance Costs			X	Private Management Company - Service Charge
Open Space Maintenance Costs			X	Private Management Company - Service Charge
<b><u>OFF-SITE</u></b>				
Local sports facilities		X		
<b>ECOLOGY</b>				
	X			Provided on-site - Secured via planning condition

On site ecology mitigations e.g Installing bird and bat boxes				
<b>FLOOD ATTENUATION</b>				
Attenuation Areas	X			Provided on-site - Secured via planning condition
<b>OTHER</b>				
Overhead power lines	X			To be undergrounded (subject to agreement).
Archaeological mitigations	X			On-site - Secured via planning condition

