

**Stoke St Mary Parish Council's response to Taunton Deane Borough Council's
Junction 25 Strategic Employment Site Public Consultation.**

27 March 2017

On 27 February 2017 we, Stoke St. Mary Parish Council were invited by Taunton Deane Borough Council, with other interested parties, to attend a presentation by Peter Brett and Partners, Taunton Deane Planning Department and others regarding the proposed Local Development Order for what is now to be named "nexus25" The Strategic Employment site East of Junction 25 of the M5 Motorway. Subsequently, we also attended the public exhibition at The Holiday Inn, Taunton on the 1 March 2017.

For the public record we wish to comment upon the on-line/ print off public consultation document provided by Taunton Deane, which we deem to be too narrow and obviously directional in its questioning and too pointed in its suggested "most important aspects." We believe more importance should have been given to the wider questions asked by parishioners:

- * "Do you think this development is necessary on this site?"
- * "Do you consider this development will be a successful addition to Taunton's importance in the West Country?"
- * "Do you have any concerns about building over and around a flood plain?"
- * "Do you consider that the developers, Summerfield Developments, are contributing enough to the required and necessary infrastructure?"
- * "Do you consider this site and its thousands of additional weekly traffic movements will cause additional air pollution issues?"

Whilst no one we have spoken to wants the currently green field site to be used for building most seem to accept that there is some need for additional employment in Taunton Deane. However, the question most often raised is that of infrastructure: Paramount to the success of "nexus25" is the A358 redevelopment, the Toneway - Creech Castle traffic scheme and the proposed new Junction 25 roundabout.

There is, without any doubt, great concern about the proposed Junction 25 roundabout re-development and the schemes ability to cope with the anticipated, additional, traffic movements in and out of the business park on a daily basis.

Concerns have also been raised regarding parking on the “nexus25” site. From what we were shown at the public consultation the business park will only have limited parking for employees and it would appear from the plans that, so far, no additional parking has been allocated for others visiting the site. We would not wish to see the atrocious parking problems such as those occurring now at Blackbrook Park. We also would like some reassurance of how the vehicles used by employees of the proposed site would exit the business park during peak traffic times? The current situation at the Blackbrook Park site is totally unsatisfactory and we would not wish to see this replicated at “nexus25”

Somerset County Council’s track record on new road scheme delivery is currently unsatisfactory and the consensus of local opinion is that the proposed new traffic scheme at Junction 25 and the business park is over complicated, confusing and in Somerset County Council’s own words, “not ideal”

There is no doubt that a large amount of public money has already been spent in getting this scheme to this point in time but we would urge Taunton Deane to take a step back and look again at what is being proposed. There are, despite what has been promised by way of water attenuation, still huge issues about building on land surrounded by a recognised flood plain. Additionally there are great concerns about the levels of air pollution with Henlade having the highest harmful, traffic emissions in Taunton Deane and importantly the parish is most anxious that the impact of traffic issues relating to the proposed business park and Junction 25 have been severely underestimated by both authorities.

Stoke St. Mary Parish Council consider that overall the “nexus 25”, Strategic Employment Site scheme is flawed for the reasons mentioned previously and with the recent news of the uncertainty of the A358 redevelopment due to the National Audit Office stating that the A358 scheme amongst others, does not offer the public purse value for money. We are seriously concerned at the viability of this proposal. The Parish Council is of the opinion that, should the upgrading of the A358 be postponed or delayed, serious consideration should be given by both Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council to deferring the proposed business park. We feel the taxpayer would not be best served by the spending of twenty million pounds providing a road scheme, which would effectively be built to service the new business park, whilst achieving limited success in alleviating the current traffic problems.

In concluding we would invite Taunton Deane Borough Council and the developers to put a hold on this scheme and spend no further public money in taking plans forward until Highways England confirm that the A 358 - Henlade by-pass redevelopment is confirmed. We do not believe that the residents of Taunton would be best served with just a business park and an over complex road system.

Stoke St. Mary Parish Council.