

## Somerset County Council's M5 J25 Improvement Scheme Consultation Report.

### **Stoke St. Mary Parish Council's response**

In response to the recently published consultation document regarding the proposed improvement scheme at Junction 25 of the M5 motorway the Parish of Stoke St. Mary wish to make the following observations:

We make no comment regarding items 1, 2 and 3.

#### Item 4

4.1 Of the Parish Councillors officers attending these events no such comments were noted by any of those attending and there was certainly no "high level of support"

4.2 Given that the recently produced Highways England plan for the development of the A358 - Henlade By-Pass, the Parish Council have considerable and serious doubts that the proposed "standalone" scheme is now viable and represents best value to the taxpayer. Somerset County Council's representative at the sessions in both Ruishton and Stoke St. Mary stated that the proposed scheme was "not ideal" Were it not for the proposed business park, "nexus25", it is our opinion the Junction 25 improvement scheme would not exist in this form.

4.3 Traffic congestion in Taunton cannot improve until several things happen with the prolonged delay to the N.I.D.R. The Creech Castle junction, The Hankeridge Business Park access and ingress, Toneway and the Obridge roundabouts to mention just a few. Nothing about the proposed scheme will do anything to alleviate the, appalling mess that is Taunton's, ongoing traffic issues.

4.4 We have no faith that the laudable suggestion that cyclists and pedestrians will be well catered for. Whilst the proposals are welcome we seriously doubt that they will be incorporated into the proposed scheme. As the cost of provision of this scheme rise cuts will inevitably have to be made and the first thing to go will undoubtedly be provision for walkers and cyclists.

4.5 These items have been widely discussed over many different forums and we accept, to a degree, that Somerset County Council has answered these queries in its usual, broad sweep, non-committal manner.

4.6 No one doubts that Taunton is in need of more space for commercial use however the Parish Council has considerable concerns that Somerset County Council are about to spend somewhere in the region of £20 million of taxpayers money to access the proposed business park "nexus25" and to relieve the traffic burden on Junction 25. Nothing we have seen or heard has

convinced us that this proposal will achieve what Somerset County Council purports. We can see no advantage to the motorists of Somerset, we remain totally unconvinced that the proposed scheme will work, in that it is overly complicated and will not improve traffic flow through the junction. We do not believe that this scheme will improve the air quality in the Henlade area and most importantly this scheme does not represent value for money.

If the employment site is so vital to Taunton we suggest inviting the site developers to make a bigger contribution to providing access and egress for "nexus25" Current traffic modelling, we suggest, takes no account of the Highways England proposed plan for the Henlade by-pass.

4.7 The funding questions have been the subject of much debate and with the recent additional contingency funding being added we understand that the necessary money is available and that the current funds are for the sole purpose of this scheme.

4.8 As mentioned previously we have grave environmental concerns regarding flooding and air pollution.

In conclusion the Parish Council consider that the current proposal should be put on hold for the time being until the Highways England route plans are confirmed. If, for instance, the current suggestion of building a new motorway junction at Killams Lane is confirmed then we have to question the veracity of going ahead with the Junction 25 improvement scheme. Moreover, as the Highways England proposal claims to substantially relieve traffic issues on the existing A358 and at Junction 25 why is this current proposal necessary its current, over complicated format? We consider that the Junction 25 traffic scheme needs completely remodelling to simplify traffic flow, to offer value for money and to promote the realistic movement of people both vehicular, on foot and by bicycle. Somerset County Council's track record on delivering schemes on time, to budget and to the satisfaction of those affected by the work is at best poor. Stoke St. Mary Parish Council has grave concerns that yet again, the Council Tax payers of Somerset will be not receiving value for money.

Stoke St. Mary Parish Council

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