**Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme**

Supplementary Consultation

24 May to 26 June 2022

**Response by West Hatch Parish Council**

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| Would like to be kept up to date about the project by email? |  Yes |
|  |  |
| Are you an affectedlandholder? |  No |
| *Is this a response to the consultation on behalf of an organisation?**If yes, which organisation?* | Yes West Hatch Parish Council |
| How did you find out about the consultation?  | On line Community Forum |

# General Comments

West Hatch Parish Council (WHPC) fully supports the scheme objectives of improving road safety, reducing traffic congestion and keep road users and local communities connected, while unlocking economic growth in Somerset and the South West. However, WHPC has consistently maintained the view that the Henlade Bypass and access on and off the road at Junction 25 and Southfields is where funding should be focused and that there is no need to Dual from Mattocks Tree Green to Southfields but work to improve, access and junction safety along this single carriageway element is essential.

*See WHPC responses to consultations: 8Th June 2017, 14th July 2017, Public Consultation 12 Oct – 22 Nov 2021.*

As a member of the Community of Parishes (CoP) WHPC supports the CoP response to the Supplementary Consultation and in particular opposes the view that NH is proposing to build a dual carriageway with only, the totally inadequate, 2 access points along the 8-mile link. NH has declared that it is not building an expressway or a motorway, but a high-quality, high-performing dual carriageway. **This has no formal DMRB standard** but the scale, limited access and junction design of the NH A358 Scheme all point to a continuation of the expressway ideology, based on GD300*: Requirements for new and upgraded all-purpose trunk roads (Expressways)*. WHPC is totally opposed to this ideology that is distorting the design of the A358.

Notwithstanding NH’s inadequate responses to WHPC’s and CoP’s attempts to mitigate the scheme design in order to take account of the local community, the following needs to be addressed. The design is unnecessarily over-engineered; it is, effectively, an urban motorway, cutting a swathe through pristine countryside; Mattocks Tree Green roundabouts being a classic example of design ideology without reference to the location. The damage to the environment, wildlife, communities etc is totally unacceptable, the NH mitigation proposals are risible and the cost outweighs any conceivable benefit, particularly in the country's present parlous financial state. NH traffic modelling is subjective and in many instances is contested as erroneous. To save 5/7 minutes journey time (NH figures) makes a mockery of the scheme's objectives and costs and there has never been any explanation of the business case for the scheme.

WHPC believe that both NH and the Local Authorities are totally ignoring the Government’s stated policy of devolving to the lowest level (that means Parish Councils) and taking proper account of local community needs and views.

# Response to Supplementary Consultation Questionnaire

# 1.Transport, traffic flows and access

**1a) Nexus 25 signalised junction.**

WHPC support the concept of traffic lights at the Nexus 25 Junction provided they are synchronised with those on J25 southbound slip as a better solution than that presented at the November Consultation. WHPC are appalled at the significant taxpayers’ funds, that have been squandered by a lack of vision on the last road improvement design at this location and believe a proper futureproof grade separated junction to and from M25 southbound should be implemented as part of the Henlade Bypass.

**1b) Mattock’s Tree Green junction:**

The dual roundabout design is over-engineered and a totally unnecessary environmental disaster in its current format. A simple underpass and graded junctions would suffice.

* **New connection at MTG eastern roundabout and new signalised crossing on the A378.**

Support, but see above, which requires a rethink of the connection.

* **Realignment of Ash Road to MTG junction connection.**

Support, but see above.

* **West Hatch Lane extension to MTG junction.**

Supported, see above. However, the design shown in NH’s ‘fly through’ is excessive in scale. West Hatch Lane is a narrow single-track lane, any link should be of similar scale, 3.5m wide only and with one passing place, supplemented by traffic restrictions to only allow local access for agricultural and residential use.

**1c) Bridge at Bickenhall Lane moved further south and restricted to walkers, cyclists and horse riders, including disabled users and local landholder access.**

Not supported. This proposal limits access to the A358 by the Neroche district to solely Staple Fitzpaine Road via the service road or West Hatch Lane via MTG junction, routes that are difficult for normal traffic and unsuitable for HGVs and large farm vehicles. West Hatch Parishioners want to see the bridge open to all traffic to spread traffic flows and enhance social cohesion, a controlled vehicular access to the bridge is unworkable. There is agreement that, with a history of problems, Higher West Hatch Lane is not suitable for an increase in traffic.

**1d) New Capland link road connecting Capland Lane and Village Road.**

No Comment.

**1e) Works to some local roads.**

No Comment

# 2. Walking, cycling, horse-riding and disabled user access

**2a) Jordans bridge.**

Supported, see CoP response

**2b) new restricted byway at Oldbroach Lane.**

See CoP response.

**2c) new signalised junction including a pedestrian and cyclist crossing on the A358 (west) close to Southfields roundabout.**

Not supported. The A358 at this point is used by traffic travelling from Chard and the south coast, traffic diverted off the A303 (south) via Horton, as well as locals from Chard, Donyatt, Horton and Broadway seeking to reach the roundabout. At peak times this stretch of the A358 (south) is heavily used and often congested. The creation of a second lane as the A358 (south) passes in front of the entrance to the Ilminster Services would complicate safe entry and exits. The installation of traffic lights would mean that traffic to and from the Services had more lanes to traverse and, particularly, those exiting right would have to wait for both entry traffic off the A358 (south) and WCH crossing, whether or not both were present. This would introduce significant additional delay to traffic approaching the roundabout and risk traffic heading towards Chard backing up to the roundabout, impeding traffic wishing to leave it for the same route. Instead, only one lane should be retained at this point and the entry/exit to the Services should be assisted by a yellow box junction, with the proposed traffic light crossing being sited further west on the A358 (south), closer to the link between Horton Cross and Broadway Street, to which it would be more relevant for walkers and cyclists.

# 3. Environmental mitigation

**3a) new areas of biodiversity and landscape mitigation away from the route.**

If the scale of the dualling was less there would be less need to mitigate the adverse impact of the Scheme on biodiversity and the environment. The present proposals are risible, it will take 50 years if ever, to restore the damage to the environment and biodiversity that dualling the whole length will cause.

**3b) hedgerow improvements proposed across the length of the scheme to connect up areas of existing suitable habitat.**

Supported, but see 3a) above, if the scale of the dualling was less there would be less need to mitigate the adverse impact the Scheme will have on suitable habitat connections.

# 4. Location of the main construction compound

**4. Main construction site compound near to Mattock’s Tree Green junction. This would include the installation of a temporary bridge to the east of the existing A358 / A378 junction.**

Not supported. The Compound should be sited on the Nexus 25 site. This would put site traffic close to the proposed Henlade Bypass, the essential element of the scheme, if the road is not fully dualled.

# 5. General Comment

5. See CoP response.

The A358 Scheme provides one great improvement – the Henlade bypass that will improve the quality of life for communities in that immediate area. However, the Scheme has serious failings. These have been voiced and documented by WHPC since 2017. The 2021 Statutory Consultation was a cynical exercise in selling NH’s preliminary design. All views differing from NH proposals were severely muted and inadequately reported in the ‘*Responding to feedback from 2021 public consultation*’ document. In spite of the deficiencies of the consultation[[1]](#footnote-1) WHPC understands that local communities strongly disagree with the fundamentals of the preliminary design.

1. Report into the deficiencies of consultation prepared by the Community of Parishes – 2021.12.20. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)