

## KINGSTON ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

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September 5 2017

### North Taunton Development

34/16/0014 (Staplegrave East) and 34/16/0007 (Staplegrave West)

Dear Councillor

We understand these twin outline applications will be discussed at a meeting of councillors and planning officials on September 20 and we would like to bring to your attention our serious concerns about this massive 1,625 home development that is right on our doorstep – and **four times** the size of Kingston St Mary.

We accept, with the greatest regret, that this swathe of productive agricultural land has been earmarked for development at some time in the future but we are asking councillors to postpone a decision on these applications in order to achieve the best possible eventual outcome.

Taunton is one of three towns nationally granted Garden Town Status. This is a superb opportunity to show what can be achieved. Unfortunately, this proposed development does not match up to the ideas in the Garden Town Expressions of Interest document and does not even deliver the objectives in the council's own strategic plans.

The outline plans for this development show a vast urban sprawl, which will be indistinguishable from hundreds of other housing estates throughout the country. Is that what we want? The council must stand firm. This is a highly-prized site. It deserves better. Far better.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid is reported as saying: "We need to build more houses, **providing they are in the right place and there is appropriate infrastructure and public services to match them.**"

We would argue this is not the right place. In the words of the Quantock Hills AONB : "***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.***

If councillors are minded to approve these outline permissions, **at the very least**, they should insist that –

- \* The spine road is built in its entirety before any homes are constructed
- \* The layout of the development respects the magnificent rural aspect of the site
- \* Dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths, entirely separate from roads, are provided

However, we would respectfully ask that you postpone a decision until the wider implications including its impact on the road network across north Taunton that is already gridlocked at peak periods, education, water/drainage/sewerage systems and GP and hospital services, have been fully explored and taken into consideration.

To allow such a massive development in a rural location, without the necessary supporting infrastructure being in place would be unsound and would cause immense disruption to the daily lives and well-being of residents and businesses across the whole of the north of the town and adjacent villages.

**Ray Stokes, Chair, Kingston St Mary Parish Council**