

The Planning Inspectorate  
(A358 Taunton to Southfields Scheme)  
Temple Quay House  
Temple Quay  
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### **A358 Taunton to Southfields Scheme Examination of Alternative Proposals**

1. The Examination of the Sparkford to Ilchester scheme raised the issue of examining alternatives presented by local communities. National Highways argued that proposed changes to the scheme that were substantial material changes or that were changes to the substance of the Application should not be accommodated within the examination process. National Highways conceded that the determination of what is or what is not a material change ultimately lay with the Examining Authority. However, that Examining Authority chose not to examine the alternatives presented by local communities.
2. It is well recorded that during the consultations for the Sparkford to Ilchester scheme local communities presented detailed proposals for alternatives to the scheme design that aimed to eliminate or at least markedly reduce the many adverse impacts of the scheme. National Highways chose not to explore, analyse or develop these community proposals in any depth and ultimately rejected them and used the arguments summarised above to prevent any rigorous examination of the proposals during the DCO process.
3. After the 2019 Sparkford to Ilchester examination, the issue of examining alternatives was tested in 2021 in the High Court following the judicial review of the Stonehenge scheme. The Court decided that the Examining Authority had failed to properly take alternatives into account and as a result the Secretary of State could not properly assess the alternatives.
4. The issue of alternatives arises in the A358 Taunton to Southfields Scheme. Local communities have proposed changes to the design to reduce the adverse impact of the scheme on the well being, health and safety of local communities. Local communities also challenge the adopted design standard as it results in a build of unnecessary scale to achieve the stated scheme objectives. A more compact design would reduce the impact of the scheme on the ecology, landscape and carbon footprint. National Highways refuses to undertake a rigorous examination of these proposals. Moreover, National Highways is not undertaking a safety risk assessment in accordance with the legal requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974.
5. During the upcoming examination of the A358 Scheme the Community of Parishes asks the Examining Authority to adhere to the ruling of the High Court and insist alternatives to the submitted design are fully considered and recommendations presented in your report to the Secretary of State. We would appreciate confirmation that this policy is now adopted within the Planning Inspectorate.

On behalf of  
Community of Parishes

Stoke St Mary Parish Council  
Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council  
Curry Mallet Parish Council  
Broadway Parish Council  
Horton Parish Council  
Pitminster Parish Council  
Corfe Parish Council  
Ilminster Town Council

West Hatch Parish Council  
Beercrocombe Parish Council  
Ashill Parish Council  
Ilton Parish Council  
Donyatt Parish Council  
Combe St. Nicholas Parish Council  
Neroche Parish Council (Representing:  
Curland, Bickenhall, Staple Fitzpaine and  
Orchard Portman Parishes)

