**Welcome to new jobs…but say no to more traffic**

Last December developers announced they had big plans for new industrial units on the Dalton Industrial estate and they distributed a leaflet to local homes seeking residents’ preliminary views.

The site, ‘Dalton 49 Thirsk’, named after the A168 junction number, will be a 43-acre development which will provide a range of job opportunities and a boost to the local economy.

No doubt some residents will have responded to the pre-planning consultation to express their views about the proposed development and perhaps to welcome the potential for new jobs for the area.

But whilst new developments bringing much needed jobs are important, the growth of Dalton Industrial Estate over the years has led to increased concern in Topcliffe about heavy lorries ignoring weight restrictions and passing through the village…and the feeling is that the recent consultation failed to adequately address concerns.

The plans for Dalton Industrial Estate have been presented to Hambleton District Council and, in consultation with the highways department of North Yorkshire County Council, that is where the main planning decisions will be made. There’ll be a formal consultation but there’s no harm in making our elected representatives know now about how we feel about the traffic implications for Topcliffe.

One resident who responded to the developer’s consultation, copied his response to Topcliffe Parish Council for information and its members subsequently fully endorsed the points made. The key points include:

* In general, the village supports the development of the local economy and local employment; and, in principle, the development of the Dalton Industrial Estate. This must, however, be done in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive way.
* We welcome the commitment that the developers have given to ensure that Dalton village is not adversely affected by traffic, particularly HGVs, or other environmental pollutants such as sound, light and odours and acknowledge that a full transport assessment will be undertaken.
* However, we are concerned that there is no reference to a similar commitment or proposals to protect Topcliffe from the adverse effects of the proposed development and in particular to the increasing HGV traffic likely to flow through the village.
* Experience tells us that the development of the Industrial Estate over recent years has correlated with a marked increase in the volume of HGVs coming through Topcliffe village. This occurs despite the statutory weight restrictions. The restrictions are regularly ignored. This pollutes the air quality, creates excessive noise and vibrations, presents a road safety risk, and damages both the public highways and private property.
* We note the reassurances that HGV traffic will access the main road network directly from Eldmire Lane onto the A168 only. However, we have little confidence that this will actually happen in practice and we are concerned that number of HGVs travelling through Topcliffe will rise further.
* We hope that the developer’s proposals, especially the transport assessment, will include measures to ensure that Topcliffe is effectively and sustainably protected from a further growth in HGV traffic.

Whilst deferring to the expertise that planners and highways experts will bring to this proposal during the planning stage, there is a range of suggestions that might be considered. These are:

* A new layout at the junction with the A168 (Dalton Lane/A168/Long Street) which physically impedes the flow of HGV traffic into Topcliffe in favour of direct access both northbound and southbound onto the A168.
* A new layout at the junction of the A61/A167 at Busby Stoop which physically impedes the flow of HGV traffic into Topcliffe in favour of using the A61/A1/A168 route to Dalton Industrial Estate.
* A revised layout at the exit from the A168 to Asenby/Cundall to impede HGV traffic taking this route through Topcliffe to the Industrial Estate.
* Revised and additional signage on all approaches advising HGVs to only use the A168 as the route to the Dalton Industrial Estate.
* Revised and additional signage at the exit to the Industrial Estate advising drivers to use the A168 only as the exit route to the main road network.
* Revised and additional signage of the statutory weight restrictions relating to Topcliffe.
* Inclusion of details in the Planning Consents and Operating Licences for Dalton Industrial Estate preventing entry and egress by HGVs via Topcliffe village.
* Additional monitoring and enforcement of the prohibited routes by the relevant authorities.

It would be great if lots of residents were to write to or email elected representatives at both District and County level to comment on the current problem of illegal HGV traffic through the village and also about the proposed development at Dalton, which potentially will increase further the amount of traffic through Topcliffe if no special measures are adopted.

Write to:

Cllr Mark Robson, Leader, Hambleton District Council, Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Rotary Way, Northallerton DL6 2UU Email: cllr.mark.robson@hambleton.gov.uk

County Cllr Robert Baker, North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton DL7 8AD

Email: cllr.robert.baker@northyorks.gov.uk

You can also refer any specific concerns about traffic issues to the Thirsk & Easingwold Neighbourhood Policing Team - Jonathan.Harrison@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

**Lorry worries**

The number of lorries using the village as a short cut is of increasing concern. Our village roads, particularly Church Street, are not suitable for large, heavy vehicles. Yet every day articulated lorries thunder through. The limit for HGVs is 7.5 tonnes unless access is required and where no alternative access is available…but drivers seem to ignore the rules.

Topcliffe Parish Council has joined North Yorkshire Lorry Watch scheme and in recent months over 500 HGVs thought to be using the village illegally have been reported to trading standards, the county department responsible for legal enforcement. Letters have also been sent to all local businesses asking them to require drivers of vehicles over 7.5 tonnes to avoid coming through the village because in all cases there are alternative routes.

A summary of the data collected by the speed signs is available on the village website at <www.topcliffe.org.uk>