

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION
2017-2037

STRETTON PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE

Section 1 -SUMMARY

This letter summarises the response of Stretton Parish Council (SPC) to the Proposed Submission Version (PSV) of Warrington Borough Council's Local Plan.

SPC is an active member of the South Warrington Parish Councils' Planning Group and the Re-Thinking South Warrington residents group, and **fully endorses the detailed concerns** that have been raised in their collective responses to the PSV.

In addition, SPC wish to specifically challenge those aspects of the PSV that will adversely affect the character and cultural heritage of our village and undermine the wellbeing of Stretton residents.

SPC acknowledge that there is a requirement to produce a Local Plan and that there is a need to provide sufficient housing and employment land to meet future needs. However, we believe that **the PSV is unsound** and its proposals for the communities in South Warrington – and for Stretton in particular - **are seriously flawed**.

The key points of this response are summarised below and further comment is provided in the following sections of this response:

- 1.1 The **baseline data** used in the PSV is **selective** – consequently the forecasts used to calculate future demand for employment and housing land **cannot be relied upon**.
- 1.2 The proposals for the **Garden Suburb** are based on these unreliable forecasts and will lead to **the unjustified destruction of the green belt**.
- 1.3 If it proceeds as planned, the Suburb will **destroy the character of our village**. The Northern half of Stretton will be dissected by a 40m wide highway that will simply become a HGV rat-run.
- 1.4 Our small community in Stretton will be overwhelmed and further fragmented. The village **will no longer be a distinct settlement** and will instead merge into the urban conurbation. **Stretton is an inset village and must be given the same protection as Appleton Thorn**.
- 1.5 Under the proposed **housing development**, Stretton would have the greatest density and highest houses within the Garden Suburb. Structures of this height and density **are out of character** with any of the existing houses in the village and **these plans must be reconsidered**.
- 1.6 The **environmental impact** from the proposed industrial expansion and unavoidable vehicle use. By allowing new huge industrial development sites with **a sole dependency upon HGV movements is incomprehensible in the 21st century**.

- 1.7 These industrial developments will lead to increased traffic congestion and cause **further damage to air quality** in Stretton, particularly those areas adjacent to the main highway routes.
- 1.8 The **infrastructure strategy** set out in LPT4 to support the PSV, is speculative, vague and underfunded. It will not resolve the **existing issues of traffic congestion** in the village nor address the well documented **problems seen on the A559** in Lower Stretton. The new **Garden Suburb Strategic Link (GSSL) and Western Link proposals will simply replace exiting pinch points with new ones.**
- 1.9 The Plan suggests there will major changes in residents' behaviour with a significant switch away from using cars but **no evidence is offered** to suggest how this will be achieved. In rural communities with very limited public transport services **this is an unrealistic aspiration.**
- 1.10 There **is no evidence** to support the assumption made in the Plan that the GSSL will reduce the level of **traffic travelling North / South through Stretton** on the A49 between M56 J10 and Stockton Heath.
- 1.11 The Plan proposes new health care and medical facilities but provides no evidence to suggest how the **necessary staff will be provided.**

Section 2 – INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Stretton is a historic rural village located in the South West part of Warrington borough. The centre of the village sits around St Matthews church which was built in 1870, the associated junior school and nearby hotels. The village also has its own post office and medical centre and part of the community parkland facilities maintained by the Pewterspear Green Trust fall within the parish boundary.

There are 2 major A roads that go through the village - the A49 North to South from Warrington towards Whitchurch, and the A559 is the main link road from Northwich.

The M56 travels East to West and the community was effectively split into 2 parts when it was constructed. Access to/from the M56 is provided via J10 where it meets both the A49 and A559. This junction and supporting A roads are prone to heavy traffic congestion at peak morning and evening times in particular. When traffic incidents arise on this section of the motorway the knock-on effect to traffic passing through Stretton is very severe.

The primary minor road in the village is the B5356 which travels East / West from Appleton Thorn to Hatton and onto the A56 and Runcorn Expressway. This minor road has a major traffic pinch point where it crosses the A49 at the Cat & Lion junction. The road is frequently used (unlawfully) by HGV's taking a short cut to / from the Appleton Thorn Trading Estate to the Expressway.

The domestic community is diverse with some properties dating back many years and others that were part of post-war redevelopment. More recently new developments were undertaken as part of the Warrington New Town initiative. The final phase of the latter

plans is currently being completed in Pewterspear, with the construction of a further 180 properties.

The village contains a site for travelling show-people in Lower Stretton and Warrington BC have recently granted permission for a permanent gypsy site within the parish.

The village has an infrequent bus service which operates primarily at peak times during weekdays and with a more limited service on Saturdays. There is no rail or other mass transit facility in the village and residents rely heavily upon car usage for their employment, schools and domestic needs.

Section 3 – SOUNDNESS OF THE PSV

SPC fully endorses the views expressed by the South Warrington Parish Councils Planning Group that the PSV contains a number of proposals which would utterly devastate these parts of the Borough.

We strongly challenge several of the basic premises contained in the Plan that suggest that widespread release of green belt and is unavoidable. This level of development would have to be supported by a new Neighbourhood Hub, new villages and a new highway and **none of these would be required if the underlying data analysis is inaccurate.**

At the stroke of a pen the PSV would destroy the unique characteristics of distinct, historic, village communities by creating a swathe of urban sprawl. **There has to be a better way to meet future demand for housing and employment land.**

SPC believes the PSV proposals are flawed and this view is supported by the following arguments:

- 3.1 The housing forecasts are overly optimistic and suggest a level of demand that is unrealistic. It seems that only favourable, historic 2014 data, has been used to support the figures and not 2016 information. The latter would project a **much lower demand figure** and significantly reduce the requirement for housing.
- 3.2 The ability of the Council to **deliver the forecast level** of housing development is very much **in doubt** given that on average c.400 new builds have been delivered in recent years.
- 3.3 The plan deliberately under plays the availability of the **Fiddlers Ferry site** within the plan period, even though this would provide a much more suitable location for the proposed **expansion in industrial premises**. The site already exists, has both road and rail interfaces and is unlikely to be suitable for housing.
- 3.4 Nor has consideration been given to using **Stretton airfield** for industrial development. Although this site sits outside of the self-imposed borders stated in the PSV, **these boundaries are clearly not set in stone**. This is evidenced by the recent decision to approve a gypsy site in Stretton that is outside of these boundaries
- 3.5 The exclusion of these sites suggest a deliberate bias and intent to convince the public that there are enough **“special circumstances”** to warrant the use of greenbelt land instead. **This simply is not the case** and any approaches for such development should therefore be rejected

- 3.6 The proposals to deliver significant **infrastructure improvements** to support the PSV **lack credibility and substance**. The ongoing issues with the transport network **around Omega** illustrate **an inability to correctly assess** the scale of transport improvements required to support major logistics sites. Therefore, SPC have **no confidence in the HGV traffic forecasts put forward in the PSV**
- 3.7 Plans for **new cycle paths and bus services** are welcomed in principle but look to be fanciful and incomplete. They are not joined up and can only be effective if they provide safe and efficient routes into the town centre. The PSV offers no proposal to address the latter and these schemes **are unlikely to work**.
- 3.8 SPC also question how the resources required to provide the public services suggested for the Neighbourhood hub will be found? Without formal agreement with the local Health Authority for funding and recruitment, **these proposals remain conceptual** and in reality will not be delivered.
- 3.9 Finally, the PSV can only be achieved if major improvements in infrastructure are put in place beforehand. Surprisingly, neither the PSV or LPT4 have been able to calculate the **full cost of these improvements**. Such a key omission **undermines the integrity of the whole plan**.

The credibility of the PSV has clearly been undermined.

It is fundamentally UNSOUND and does not offer a viable plan for the future of Warrington.

Section 4 - PSV Impacts upon Stretton

If the PSV is fully implemented the recommendations in the Plan (and supporting LPT4 proposal) would have a devastating effect upon Stretton. The rural setting and traditional village characteristics of this small community would be swept away by a tide of tall, high density housing.

The village would be surrounded by a **fog of dangerous emissions** arising from queues of vehicles waiting for on /off access to the main highway links passing through the village to J10 at the M56.

SPC cannot agree to these proposals as they stand and are firmly of the opinion that the **PSV is fundamentally unsound.**

The grounds for this response to the PSV are summarised below:

4.1 Loss of Identity

- i. The village will lose its historic characteristics and rural setting and will cease to be a distinct community. It **will lose its own identity** and become part of the urban sprawl spreading outwards from Stockton Heath and Appleton.
- ii. The village will be further dissected by the proposed new highway, destroying **any sense of community** that currently exists.

- iii. Parts of the proposed new village “A” would be situated in Stretton but no information provided on the impact upon the existing community. **SPC believe there is no need to create Village “A” is unnecessary.**
- iv. The Plan proposes that other inset villages in the area will be able to retain their distinct identity and **this same level of protection must be afforded to Stretton**

4.2 Proposed Housing Development

- i. Stretton is already undergoing a major expansion in population, with the development of **180** new houses by Barratt Homes – representing **an increase of around 40%** in the number of households in the village.
- ii. Despite this, the Garden Suburb Development Framework provides for an additional **785 houses** in various parcels across the village with a **further 595** properties in the adjacent area A6. Housing on this scale and density **will create urban sprawl and must be reconsidered.**
- iii. Much of the housing will be alongside the proposed new highway where there will be a **higher density of housing** which will be up to **4 storeys high.**
- iv. Stretton is **the only village** in the area with domestic buildings of this **height and density.**
- v. **Stretton is being treated unfairly**, carrying a fuller density of houses at a height not seen anywhere else.
- vi. **This is a gross imbalance in a small community and this aspect of the PSV is flawed and unsound.**

5 Transport and Infrastructure

The impacts of the traffic management proposals upon our village have not been fully considered. **Stretton is hardly mentioned** in the PSV / LTP4 infrastructure documents yet is expected to **absorb the fallout** from those proposals.

The SPC’s specific concerns are:

5.1 M56/A49/ A559 & GSSL

- I. Stretton is already a bottleneck for road transport users travelling through the village via the A49 / A559/ M56 and B5356
- II. The Borough Council have acknowledged – and **failed to address** – the problems caused by **HGVs** passing through Lower Stretton **on the A559.**
- III. The Council has accepted that the A49 / B5356 Junction at the **Cat & Lion is operating at full capacity**, but still gave approval for major new housing developments in Pewterspear, Appleton Cross and Grappenhall Heys **without implementing any plans to alleviate the junction.**
- IV. The increased domestic traffic from up to 1500 new houses in or around the village and additional HGV/LGV movements from the proposed distribution hub at Appleton Thorn is a major **cause of concern to residents and SPC**

- V. The solution put forward in the PSV/ LTP 4 is to supposedly alleviate this by creating a **new Strategic Link** through the Garden Suburb. This route of this 40m wide carriageway **has not been disclosed** but will pass somewhere through the Suburb from the A50 through to the A49.
- VI. This new route **will devastate the northern part of Stretton** and further **divide this part of the village into two**.
- VII. The proposed termination point onto the A49 adjacent to J10 of the M56 is will be unworkable. There are no improvements planned for the A49 (North or South) or the A559 and long queues will form as vehicles try to gain access to the M56, A49 Southbound and A559
- VIII. The Plans suggest that there **will be improvements made to J10** to accommodate the huge increase in traffic but the details are vague. **Has anything specific has been agreed with Highways England?**
- IX. Some of the additional traffic will undoubtedly be heading towards Northwich and this will **compound the existing problems of HGV's on the A559**.
- X. The proposed highway solution is therefore inadequate and unfit for purpose in its current form. **The congestion problems around J10 need a bigger and more strategic solution.**
- XI. **Given the ongoing problems at Omega, SPC believes that this can only be solved by taking the proposed highway over the M56 between Junctions 9 & 10 with a supporting network beyond Lower Stretton to distribute traffic onto the M56, A49 and A559 in a more controlled manner.**

5.2 The Western Link

SPC applauds the enterprise shown by the Council to alleviate the across town movement of traffic from the A56 in the east to the A57 in the west. However, the Link will provide little benefit to residents in Stretton – unless they regularly have to travel west via the town centre.

However, we are concerned that:

- I. There is a distinct likelihood that **the link will have a negative impact upon Stretton** as vehicles leaving the link on the A56 **will use the B5356** as a short cut through to the Garden Suburb employment and residential areas.
- II. The **weight limit restrictions** on this road, will be ignored by HGV drivers and speed enforcement will be an ongoing issue.
- III. This unplanned **potential increase in B5356 traffic** will **undoubtedly increase congestion at the Cat & Lion junction** and badly disrupt the lives of local residents.

Section 6 – Environmental Concerns

The PSV has **failed to fully recognise** the damaging effects of vehicle based pollutants that will arise from the housing and infrastructure proposals that have been put forward. In Particular SPC would like highlight the following:

- i. **Air quality** in Warrington is (shamefully) one of the worst in UK and any plans that will lead to increased traffic congestion at key pinch points **can only make matters worse**
- ii. To allow the construction of huge logistics sites that are **accessible solely by an overcrowded road network is absolute folly**
- iii. Similarly, to produce a plan for the Garden Suburb without providing a road network capable of moving traffic quickly **across the MSC, Bridgewater Canal and River Mersey** is at best naïve.
- iv. The consolidated impact of the above will be to **further worsen air quality** along the overcrowded transport links. It absolutely perverse that the PSV should propose to build taller and higher density housing along and between these routes.

These vehicle corridors will generate a fog of pollutants across residential areas. They are a recipe for poor health and a disaster for the well-being of residents.

Section 5 – Conclusions

The impact of the PSV / LTP4 proposals as currently outlined upon Stretton will be catastrophic.

They are unsound and in particular:

- They suggest a level of demand for housing and industrial development that has been significantly over estimated
- They demand the release of greenbelt on an unparalleled basis with a view to delivering annual levels of development well beyond the proven delivery capability if the Borough Council
- Stretton village would be drowned under a sea of unwanted vehicles and with a swathe of inappropriate housing density and height
- The proposed infrastructure improvements are patchy, piecemeal and do not deliver a workable strategic solution – they will simply compound known existing problems
- The health, quality of life and wellbeing of Stretton residents will be significantly damaged if they go ahead.

The PSV proposals are unworkable, unrealistic and unsound.

It is time to THINK AGAIN

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL – LTP4 CONSULTATION

STRETTON PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE

Section 1 -SUMMARY

This letter summarises the response of Stretton Parish Council (SPC) to Warrington Borough Council's Local Transport Plan (LTPA4).

SPC is an active member of the South Warrington Parish Councils' Planning Group and ReThinking South Warrington residents group and fully endorses the detailed concerns that have been raised in their collective responses to LTP4.

In addition, SPC wish to specifically challenge those aspects of LTP4 that will adversely affect our village and undermine the wellbeing of residents.

SPC acknowledge that there is a requirement to produce a Transport Plan and that there is a need to provide an upgraded infrastructure capable of servicing the future and growing needs of the community.

However, we believe that the proposals as outlined offer only a piecemeal solution and contain aspirational objectives that are inadequately supported by detailed costings and hard evidence

Its proposals for the communities in South Warrington – and for Stretton in particular - **are seriously flawed.**

The key points of this response are summarised below and further comment is provided in the following sections of this response:

- 1.1 The **transport network required to facilitate** the proposed industrial expansion at Barleycastle Lane has been underestimated.
- 1.2 The development of an industrial site of the scale proposed must have multi nodal facilities and not rely **a sole dependency upon HGV movements.**
- 1.3 These industrial developments will lead to increased traffic congestion and cause **further damage to air quality** in Stretton, particularly those areas adjacent to the main highway routes.
- 1.4 The infrastructure strategy does not mention or address the well-known **problems seen on the A559** in Lower Stretton.
- 1.5 The new Garden Suburb Strategic Link (GSSL) will slice through our community to join the M56 at an already **overcrowded junction with the A49, A559 and M56.**
- 1.6 There is **no evidence** to support the assumption made in the Plan that the GSSL will reduce the level of **traffic travelling North / South through Stretton** on the A49 between M56 J10 and Stockton Heath.

- 1.7 There are no plans to widen the Northbound A49 which relies upon the historic crossings over the Bridgewater canal and the Manchester Ship Canal. This is a **significant omission** which will cause increased congestion on this major route.
- 1.8 The **Western Link proposals** fail to recognise the likelihood of a significant increase in vehicles **using the B5356** to travel to / from the A56 from/ to the employment sites in Barleycastle Lane
- 1.9 The Plan suggests there will major changes in residents' behaviour with a significant switch away from using cars but **no evidence is offered** to explain how this will be achieved.
- 1.10 The Plan fails to offer a viable public transport solution or provide a feasible mass transit option for South West Warrington

Section 2 – INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Stretton is a historic rural village located in the South West part of Warrington borough. The centre of the village sits around St Matthews church which was built in 1870, the associated junior school and nearby hotels. The village also has its own post office and medical centre and part of the community parkland facilities maintained by the Pewterspear Green Trust fall within the parish boundary.

There are 2 major A roads that go through the village - the **A49** North to South from Warrington towards Whitchurch, and the **A559** is the main link road from Northwich. This latter road is very narrow in places and urgently requires widening or by-passing as it barely manages to cope with current HGV traffic

The **M56** travels East to West and the community was effectively split into 2 parts when it was constructed. Access to/from the M56 is provided via J10 where it meets both the A49 and A559.

J10 and the supporting A roads are prone to heavy traffic congestion at peak times with traffic often tailing back in both directions at Owen's Corner. When traffic incidents arise on this section of the motorway the knock-on effect to traffic passing through Stretton is very severe.

The primary minor road in the village is the **B5356** which travels East / West from Appleton Thorn to Hatton and onto the A56 and Runcorn Expressway. This minor road has a major traffic pinch point where it crosses the A49 at the **Cat & Lion junction**. The road is frequently used (unlawfully) by HGV's taking a short cut to / from the Appleton Thorn Trading Estate to the Expressway.

The village has an infrequent bus service which operates primarily at peak times during weekdays and with a more limited service on Saturdays. There is no rail or other mass transit facility in the village and residents rely heavily upon car usage for their employment, schools and domestic transport needs.

Section 3 – Impact of LPT4 on Stretton

SPC fully endorses the views expressed by the South Warrington Parish Councils Planning Group that the proposals contained in LTP4 **would utterly devastate Stretton.**

Some of the impacts upon Stretton are as follows:

3.1 The proposed Garden Suburb Strategic Link (GSSL)

- i. This would be built only to facilitate a swathe of industrial and urban development and would **destroy the individual identity and character** of Stretton village.
- ii. This new route **will devastate the northern part of Stretton** and further **divide this part of the village into two.**
- iii. The exact route of this 40m wide carriageway **has not been disclosed** and SPC / residents are unable to fully assess its impact.
- iv. The suggested junction of the **GSSL at J10 of the M56** needs to be re-assessed. This junction already has 2 intersections with traffic from the A49 and a third with the A559 and the plan has **no firm proposals for improving this junction.**
- v. A truly strategic solution should consider **extending the GSSL over the M56**
- vi. The ongoing issues with the road network around Omega illustrate **an inability within the Council to correctly assess** the scale of transport improvements required to support major logistics sites. Therefore, **the HGV traffic forecasts** put forward in LTP4 must **be considered to be unreliable**

3.2 The Western Link

SPC applauds the enterprise shown by the Council to alleviate the across town movement of traffic from the A56 in the east to the A57 in the west. However, the Link will provide little benefit to residents in Stretton – unless they regularly have to travel west via the town centre.

However, we are concerned that the costs of building the link **have been significantly under-estimated and:**

- I. **The link will have a negative impact upon Stretton** as vehicles leaving the link on the A56 **will use the B5356** as a short cut through to the Garden Suburb employment and residential areas.
- II. The **weight limit restrictions** on the B5356, will be ignored by HGV drivers and speed enforcement will be an ongoing issue.
- III. This unplanned **increase in B5356 traffic will undoubtedly increase congestion at the Cat & Lion junction** and badly disrupt the lives of local residents.
- IV. The knock on impacts arising from the new road need **to be remodelled and re-assessed.**

3.3 Cycleways & Public Transport

Plans for new cycleways paths and bus services are welcomed in principle but look to be piecemeal and incomplete.

The plans for increasing the use of bicycles for commuting will require major behavioural change and there is little information provided as to how this will be achieved. The reality is that residents will not want to use cycle paths adjacent to roads that are congested and heavily used by HGVs.

The **bus services** in Stretton are infrequent and expensive and SPC acknowledges that usage levels are low. The Plan proposes a new range of services in the A50 – A49 loop along the GSSL but offers nothing to improve congestion on either of these roads into / out of the town centre.

Journey times are likely to involve extended zig-zag routes entering onto overloaded main roads and would be **unpopular and unworkable**.

Finally, SPC noted that the conceptual suggestions regarding a **future mass transit system** did not include any provision for Stretton or the immediate surrounding areas despite the avalanche of new housing that is proposed under the PSV.

Such an omission, will simply encourage residents to retain their cars and make more journeys by road. Unfortunately, the increased levels of congestion that will be encountered when trying to reach Warrington town centre will also mean that **South Warrington residents will prefer to travel to Chester, Manchester and Northwich instead**.

Section 4 – Environmental Concerns

LTP4 has **failed to fully recognise the damaging effects** of vehicle based pollutants that will arise from the infrastructure proposals that have been put forward. In Particular SPC would like highlight the following:

- i. **Air quality** in Warrington is (shamefully) one of the worst in UK and any plans that will lead to increased traffic congestion at key pinch points **can only make matters worse**
- ii. Similarly, to produce a plan for the Garden Suburb without providing a road network capable of moving traffic quickly **across the MSC, Bridgewater Canal and River Mersey** will lead to more congestion and emissions.

- iii. The consolidated impact of the above will be to **further worsen air quality** along the overcrowded transport links.
- iv. **These vehicle corridors will generate a fog of pollutants across residential areas. These proposals are a recipe for poor health and a disaster for the well-being of residents and must be reconsidered.**

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