

Submission to the Hearing in respect of the proposals in the Rugby Local Plan matter 4, Issue 4b

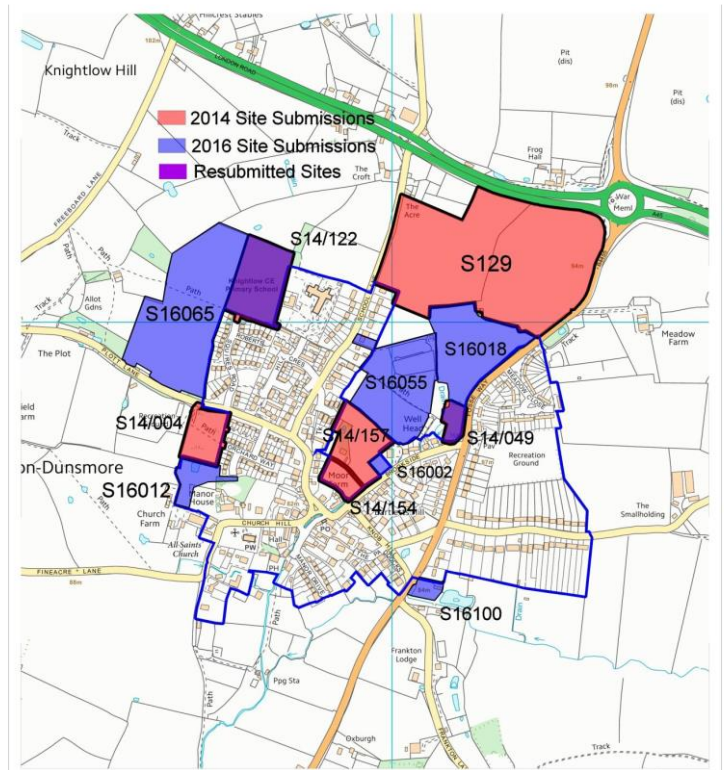
Why one of the preferred sites in Stretton on Dunsmore is not the most appropriate when considered against the reasonable alternatives.

It would be hard to dispute that there is a housing shortage in the UK or that every community is likely to find themselves the subject of additional development. Indeed, some development is often welcome as it supports the services and diversity of a vibrant village such as Stretton on Dunsmore (SoD).

At the outset of The RBC consultation there were a number of sites considered in Stretton on Dunsmore:

The final plan has identified just 2 preferred sites and rejected others.

One of the preferred sites (DS3.10 being S14/004 on the map) could probably be accommodated within the existing infrastructure of the village as it is smaller and would have less impact but to develop two sites on this side of the village will cause significant problems.



It is the view of a number of people in the village that concentrating so much of the new development on the west side of the village will have a serious adverse impact on the village and, in particular, the village centre. The overriding concern is therefore focussed on the larger development **S14/122 on the map being DS3.11** referred to as “land off Squires Rd” due to:

- The unique challenges posed by the road infrastructure (or lack thereof) to the west of the village where the majority of roads in and out of the village are single lane with the exception of School Lane which exits onto the A45 dual carriageway towards Coventry. As a result, much of the traffic from this side of the village has, of necessity, to enter and exit via single lane roads or the village centre and thence via other single lane roads.
- There is already a considerable congestion issue in the village centre – which is a conservation area with no capacity to be widened or otherwise changed to allow better traffic flow.
- So much additional traffic from c 80 new homes, particularly at peak times will impose a considerable danger to pedestrians, many of which are children, walking to the school. There is a dearth of pavements in the village centre, particularly as Church Hill joins Brookside and thence School Lane and this is a primary route for many going to and from the school.
- The proposed site is some considerable distance from the village centre and most amenities such that many residents will inevitably drive to the shop, village hall and pubs. In fact, walking is dangerous because there is no pavement on School Lane as it enters the village centre and this too is a deterrent. Many people in Squires Road already do drive and these new homes will be further away.
- The potential for greater levels of flooding in the village centre which is located in the lowest point of the village and into which the access roads to the two preferred sites lead.

The road network into and out of Stretton on Dunsmore

Whilst it is certainly true that SoD is a large rural settlement; the road network was conceived when it was a great deal smaller and, as such, is far less comprehensive than in many much smaller villages. Most roads in and out, even to the village centre, are single lane without pavements, or effectively so because of parked cars. The local plan waxes lyrical about the conservation area and the rural nature of the surrounding area and rightly so. Such a large concentration of development as is suggested cannot be accommodated physically without considerable detriment to the village and its surrounding countryside.

On the west of the village the roads are narrow (Plott Lane, Freeboard Lane and Finacre Lane) and there is only one two lane road (School Lane) which exits onto the A45 dual carriageway meaning that any user of School Lane can only leave in the direction of Coventry or otherwise go through the centre of the village onto Brookside. See Appendix pictures 1-6.

In the other direction out of the village Brookside is technically 2 lane but as cars are habitually parked along most of its length that too, is effectively a single lane road. See Appendix pictures 8 and 9.

The centre of Stretton on Dunsmore is often very congested already, especially at peak times when school and public buses add to the traffic from residents many of which have to pass through the village centre on their way out of the village. The village centre has a severe parking shortage as most of the houses have little or no off street parking and visitors to the shop, businesses, church, village hall and pubs all park in the centre too. When there is a wedding or funeral it can be even worse. Several of the roads into the centre have no pavements either.

Over the last year there has been building work taking place within the conservation area at Yew Tree Hall (a farmhouse renovation and 2 barn conversions) and a new build on land off Knob Hill and the impact on the village centre has been significant. The vehicles for the workmen themselves and the vans have added to the congestion but the deliveries and the plant movements have caused significant issues within the village centre as they have no alternative but to enter down Brookside (because most of the other routes are not suitable for HGVs) passing the bus stops and the shop and pub. Whilst such traffic would be an issue for a limited period, there is no doubt that larger developments would have an even greater impact. Even if the HGVs were directed to enter the village from the A45 (requiring them to go to the Memorial roundabout) there would be a significant impact.

Stretton has also been adversely affected by the huge increase in traffic along the Fosseway to JLR at Gaydon and the congestion at the Fosseway/Oxford Road junction in Princethorpe which results in motorists taking a short cut through the village to join the Oxford road from Freeboard Lane. If, as a result of this development, Plott Lane and Finacre Lane were to be widened this could only make such a "rat run" ever more attractive.

The RBC Plan has identified a smaller site – DS 3.10 - as suitable and it will have an impact but should pose less of an issue.

The issue is that there is also a larger site at DS 3.11 which would exit onto Plott Lane almost directly opposite DS 3.10 and, were both these sites to be developed, there would be a concentration of development of c70 - 80 homes where there is a poor road infrastructure.

It is almost certain that all of those new residents will have cars and that would represent in the region of 200 new vehicles – assuming at least 2 and sometimes 3 vehicles per dwelling. Each of those vehicles is likely to enter and exit the village at least once each day resulting in, a very conservative, 400 extra journeys into or out of the village.

Virtually all traffic from the west and centre of the village, and this would include the c400 extra movements, already exit and enter the village via single lane roads and/or the village centre, as they use the following routes:

- **Plott Lane** and that will also mean Freeboard Lane too for traffic going to Leamington or possibly Coventry.
- **The village centre** for traffic going to Rugby and London, and thence to Brookside or Knob Hill to join the Fosse (for JLR and Banbury) and, at peak times often to Coventry too as it is easier to get onto the A45 at the Memorial roundabout.
- **School Lane** for traffic going to Coventry and Birmingham mainly outside peak times.

Traffic from the east of the village, such as the Fosse Way, Rugby Lane and Meadow Close tends to go onto the Fosse Way to join the A45 either towards Coventry (and Leamington) or Rugby/London or towards Princethorpe, avoiding the village centre. See map below which shows the location of the sites and the road network.

It is our view that any development in Stretton on Dunsmore should not be concentrated solely to the west of the village where the road network, unless changed significantly, is totally inadequate for the scale of such development. To the east of the village there are sites that are more readily accessible to the village amenities and which can be more easily accommodated within the existing road infrastructure. In fact, the **only** advantage of the site at DS 3.11 is that it is closer to the school (although nothing else) but, there is an existing public footpath across the Five Acre field from Brookside to School Lane which could be improved so that children can have a pleasant walk to school.

Flooding

Stretton village centre is in a bowl and has periodically had flooding in the village centre (recently in March 2016 see Appendix picture 7) and much of the water comes either down Plott Lane and School Lane or down Brookside from the mini roundabout on the Fosse Way.

There is also an issue with flooding at houses on Roberts Close from water running off the site at S14/122 which is on a hill behind them.

Any new development in Stretton would likely add to this issue and whilst it is almost certainly common to any of the sites it is arguably a bigger issue at DS 3.11.

There are other options in Stretton on Dunsmore

Other shortlisted development sites on the other side of the village need not cause the same level of congestion in the village centre as residents could enter and leave the new sites without passing through the village centre. They could directly access the Fosseway and thence any of the major routes. Several of the other sites could also provide safe and pleasant walking routes to the village school and shorter walks to the amenities in the village centre and the Doctor's surgery too.

Most of them are also on flatter land and some are large sites where a more appropriate flood mitigation solution could be put in place.

Following the consultation there were a number of objections raised to the other proposed sites such as:

It would encourage "ribbon development" - but it is hard to see why S16018 would present such a problem when there is already housing on the other side of the Fosseway and surely to be able to offer a site that has better links to major routes and is closer to the village amenities would be preferable?

Highways Agency objected to sites opening onto the Fosseway as it is a major road but much of the traffic from the new housing will join the Fosseway anyway, and that would be from Brookside via a mini roundabout which surely is less than ideal?

In an ideal scenario, surely a site that could provide all the necessary housing with the potential for a more attractive development and facilitating a much better junction with the Fosseway than that currently from Brookside would be a much better option.

This solution would maintain the open aspect from the A45/Fosseway roundabout, avoid the “ribbon development” issue as there is already housing opposite, avoid unnecessary congestion in the village centre and yet offer a location within easier reach of village amenities, bus routes and roads in any direction. It would also, if a roundabout was on the junction with the Fosseway provide a more effective traffic calming solution than the current chicane. See Appendix picture 11.

Conclusion

Aware that the hearing cannot recommend alternatives and is intended to determine whether the best option has been selected it is suggested that DS 3.11 is not the optimal location for a development of c50 homes when there are reasonable alternatives – which are supported by a number of residents of this village. If Stretton on Dunsmore is destined to provide sites for up to 100 dwellings; then the majority of those new homes must be located in areas with better access to the major road routes.

It is not sensible to concentrate c80 new homes in a location that will add to village centre congestion and is largely accessed by single lane roads without pavements. Development should be spread across the village and preferably located on two lane routes and enable new residents to bypass the village centre if possible.

Any new development should also be considered in the light of the existing and future flooding risk.