Worcestershire Parkway Garden Town

In 2019 South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) presented revised options for meeting their housing targets set by central government.

Their previous strategy had been dispersed developments across the South Worcestershire area but this was deemed too disruptive for small villages, and from a road infrastructure perspective too expensive.

They based their new options appraisal in part on a 'rail-based strategy' and identified the development of Worcestershire Parkway Garden Town as a strategic location. When the preferred options were presented in 2019 there were considerable concerns raised by local people. However, SWDP have pressed on with the Worcestershire Parkway Garden Town proposal.

The SWDP timetable has been revised on a number of occasions and the latest timetable is below. The latest extension was the result of the previous evidence base being insufficient as infrastructure requirements (including utilities and transport) needed to be further assessed.

- Publication Consultation (Regulation 19) – July-August 2022
- Submission (Regulation 22) – November 2022
- Independent Examination (Regulation 24) – February-May 2023
- Receipt of Inspector's Report (Regulation 25) – August 2023
- Adoption (Regulation 26) – October 2023

The plans for the WP Garden Town and are still at concept stage but will be based on the following:

- 10,000 new dwellings (5000 delivered in the plan period to 2041 and 5000 in the Plan period beyond 2041).
- A new Town Centre based near to the railway station to the East of the B4804
- An area of development stretching from the edge of the M5 in the North to Wadborough in the south, the railway line to the west and the A44 to the East
- 50 hectares of employment land
- Phase 1 – 1 x Secondary School, 4 x Primary Schools, Sixth Form College in centre. Phase 1-2 Special School. Phase 2 1 x Secondary School, 3 x Primary Schools.
- Health Centre / Hub & Primary Care Services
- 2 Traveller sites (10 pitches per site) across 2 phases.
- Supporting services and other community facilities including a multi-purpose Community Centre, Faith spaces, arts, cultural, exhibition, library, visitor facilities, emergency services, a leisure centre, youth centres, sports facilities and playing pitches
- Potentially a new road stretching from the B4804 south of Stoulton across current fields towards the railway line and then joining back to the B4804 near to the station (phase 2)
- A new road linking the A44 to the Town Centre and Parkway Railway Station.

- Fundamentally, the spatial development approach has been prepared to be sensitive to the landscape, heritage assets, with appropriate water management and ecological protections.
- Built on 'Garden Town principles' and 'Living Locally' principles with green spaces and green infrastructure, cycle and footpaths with the aim that all parts of the town can be reached between 10, 15, 20 or 25 minutes depending on cycle or foot. A community transport system will also be introduced.

This is not an exhaustive list but highlights some of the key points

In August 2021 the Parish Councils of Stoulton, Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton, Whittington, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey and White Ladies Aston, formed a Joint Parish Committee (JPC) to agree a joint approach and act as a single voice for the Parish Councils.

The JPC is of the view that it would be unrealistic to suggest that there should be zero development in the area of the station, but the scale and impact of what is being proposed is not acceptable and fails on measure of viability, achievability and sustainability. The JPC favours smaller more contained neighbourhoods which would allow plans to be modified over this time period rather than committing to a New Town to be developed over a 40-year period given the changes we have witnessed in just the last 3 years!

We should not see this as something that will not affect us for another 20 years. If approved then the area will be under development for a 40 year period starting as early as 2024.

In October we met with Wychavon Council and presented a number of concerns and questions which were discussed at the meeting. We also received a written response to our questions and subsequently wrote back where we felt our questions had not been adequately answered. We continue to engage with the council representatives.

The documents for these are linked from the Stoulton Parish Council Website - Stoultonparishcouncil.org. If you do not have the internet we will make paper copies available at Stoulton Village Hall coffee mornings (1st Saturdays of the month and The Thursday Lunch Club events (usually 2nd Thursday). Dates for these are advertised in the Villager.

One of our concerns was the limited time available for public consultation – 2 months during summer holiday period. SWDP have committed to make their plan documents for the full SWDP public in early May and are developing a communication plan aimed at reaching the population within the SWDP area. The Parish Councils will hold public meetings – for Stoulton and Drakes Broughton these will be in May once we have confirmation as to when the SWDP documents are to be published.

Ultimately the decision as to whether the SWDP is accepted (or adopted) and whether the Parkway development will go ahead will be for the Planning Inspector to assess during the independent examination period. The JPC will be putting together a comprehensive document detailing our concerns but it will be important that any members of the public with concerns also put them to the Inspector during the consultation time period.