

Broad Oak Preservation Society

Comments on the Sturry Crossing and Link Road Position Statement agreed between Kent County Council and Canterbury City Council dated May 2015:

In our view this Position Statement agreed between the two authorities presents a wildly optimistic view of the situation that would apply if the construction of 650 houses were allowed on the Broad Oak & Sturry strategic sites prior to the construction of the Sturry Link Road.

The Statement takes as its starting point the theoretical DMRB¹ capacity of the road given its width, which is stated to be 1250 vph (vehicles per hour). We assume this is traffic in each direction, although this is not stated; this assumption is consistent with how data is presented in the relevant part of the DMRB. We cannot see where the figure of 1250 is derived; there is no direct match with the tables contained in the DMRB, which appear to suggest the capacity of an urban road of the size quoted would be lower than 1250 vph. However we will accept this figure for the purposes of analysis.

The Statement makes it clear that the peak capacity quoted makes no allowance for interruptions caused by the level crossing. There are nine train movements through Sturry station on weekdays in the two peak hours between 07:00 and 09:00; if the average duration of each crossing closure is 100 seconds² then the crossing is closed for a total of 15 minutes in that 2 hour period, reducing capacity by 12.5%. The true theoretical maximum capacity is therefore 1095 vph. The Statement gives the actual peak hour flow as 1350 vph, which represents an excess of 23% over the true theoretical maximum. The A28 through the Sturry crossing is already grossly stressed.

It is said that the developers would need to construct³ 650 houses in order to generate their financial contribution to the costs of the Link Road. The occupation of these homes would generate additional traffic flows which would have to be accommodated during the construction period of the Link Road. Where in our opinion the Statement is deficient is that it estimates the additional traffic movements across the Sturry crossing at 114. It is not clear if this is an hourly rate, although the context would suggest that it is. There is no rationale given for the derivation of this figure of 114.

¹ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. Tables giving maximum traffic flows for roads of different types and widths are found in Volume 5, Section 1, Part 3.

² Closure times can be excessive: the design of the station is such that when trains longer than 6 carriages stop at the station the crossing remains closed for the whole time the train is stationary to set down and pick up passengers.

³ The developer will also need to find buyers for all 650 houses before their financial contribution can be generated. This may add an additional period of time before the construction of the Link can start.

These 650 houses will all be full market value properties. It is therefore highly likely there will be at least one occupant in each house in full time employment, travelling to and from work each day. A small number of houses may be purchased by retired people, but that will be offset by households with two people in employment.

The location of the employment for these 650 people is most likely to be in Canterbury, as there is no other significant development in Canterbury in the early years of the Local Plan. A minority of residents may be working elsewhere in the district and not requiring access to Canterbury – this is likely to be offset by those families with teenage children requiring access to secondary schools in Canterbury, who will be conveyed to school by car.

Barring some radical changes to people's habits, these journeys to work will be undertaken largely by private car. Even if the Council's strategy to persuade commuters to make more use of the Park and Ride service is successful, residents on the new developments will still need to cross the Sturry crossing to access the Park and Ride. We are therefore faced with at least an additional 600 vehicle movements during the morning peak between 07:00 and 09:00 – that is an additional 300vph, which would bring the total peak movements across the Sturry crossing to 1650 vph, which is 50% above the actual capacity of the crossing. This is a recipe for excessive congestion and gridlock.

It should also be remembered that prior to the completion of the Link Road the only access to the new developments will be from the Herne Bay Road. This road is already subject to extreme peak hour congestion because of the nature of its junction with the A28 Island Road immediately adjacent to the Sturry crossing. Broad Oak residents are concerned that many of the new residents will turn north on the Herne Bay Road and join the existing rat-run through our village.

Alan Holden
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