



## WESTBERE PARISH COUNCIL

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20 October 2022

To:

- i. Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding, Leader of Canterbury City Council
- ii. Cllr Dan Watkins, Canterbury City Council
- iii. Cllr Jeanette Stockley, Canterbury City Council, Lead member for Transport
- iv. Planning at CCC by email to [planning@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:planning@canterbury.gov.uk)
- v. Mr David Statham, Managing Director, South Eastern Railway, Friars Bridge Court, 41-45 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8PG
- vi. Sir Roger Gale, MP, by email to [GALERJ@parliament.uk](mailto:GALERJ@parliament.uk) (and with a request that he forwards on the correspondence to Rosie Duffield MP, as MP for Sturry)
- vii. Hazel Walters, KCC Highways Manager
- viii. Haroon Chughtai, KCC, Director of Highways and Transportation
- ix. Tim Read, KCC, Major Projects Team
- x. Councillor Mike Whiting, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for economic, environment and expansion development
- xi. Councillor Michael Payne, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Highways
- xii. Councillor David Brazier, Kent County Council Member, re Transport Strategy for Kent
- xiii. Councillor Alan Marsh, Kent County Council, and Member for Westbere
- xiv. Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council
- xv. Officer, Mike Bailey, Senior Strategy and Improvement Officer, Canterbury City Council (concerned with the CCC Air Quality plan)
- xvi. Cllr Georgina Glover, Canterbury City Council and ward member for Westbere
- xvii. Cllr Louise Harvey-Quirke, Canterbury City Council and ward member for Westbere
- xviii. Sturry Parish Council
- xix. Fordwich Parish Council
- xx. Mr Mark Carne, Chief Executive, Network Rail, 1 Eversholt Street London NW1 2DN.

Hello everyone

Westbere Parish Council is writing to you on the back of this current planning application, a strategic site in the Canterbury District Local Plan:

### **CA/22/01845 - Land To The North Of Hersden, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 4HY**

**Hybrid planning application comprising: Full planning application for development of 261 residential dwellings (including affordable housing); with vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from A28 Island Road; open space; landscaping; internal roads and car parking; sustainable drainage system together with associated earthworks and infrastructure, Outline application (with all matters reserved) for up to 539 dwellings (including affordable housing); 1 ha of land for employment floor space (accommodating a café, use class E-b; office floorspace, use class E-g; light industrial, use class E-g); 0.8 ha of primary school extension land; new community building (use class F2); new sports pavilion (use class F2); open space, including equipped play, playing pitches and landscaping; mobility hubs; sustainable drainage system; landscape bund together with associated earthworks and infrastructure.**

Whilst this application is not in the parish of Westbere it inevitably has severe implications on it, as the villages of Hersden and Westbere feed on to the A28 arterial Road in and out of Sturry/Canterbury. This application will increase the traffic impact enormously and thus in doing so increase the difficulties residents already face in leaving the village of Westbere in order to join the traffic on the A28. This will apply to each of the three exit roads, Westbere Lane, Church Lane and Bushy Hill Road, along with the Pennington Close cul-de-sac.

Importantly, more traffic will create even longer queues and severe traffic congestion when the Sturry level crossing barriers are down. At present the queues frequently reach back to Westbere Lane, even before this development and all the new homes in the vicinity are built.

Westbere Parish Council would therefore push yet again for signal repositioning to allow for the lengthening of the Sturry station platforms to avoid train over-hang and lengthy barrier down times as a result. We therefore repeat our previous request, below.

**We are writing to each interested party/key stakeholder and ask that you please consider this, and also ask for an update from each of you, as to the current situation please.**

Westbere Parish Council has held a long desire to push for the lengthening of the platforms at Sturry train station to negate train overhang and alleviate traffic congestion on the A28 Island Road and the Herne Bay Road (A291). Both roads carry heavy traffic, including buses and frequent lorries.

### **Background**

The level crossing at Sturry is closed for 17 minutes in every hour. (See Footnote 1 for further information). The regular traffic congestion frequently backs up for over a mile from the crossing. The level crossing 'down time' is made worse as the Sturry station platforms are too short, causing any train of more than four carriages to experience "train overhang", so the barriers cannot be raised. The arrangement of the platforms is such that both up trains and down trains overlap the crossing.

This issue is only going to get worse because of the housing developments for more than 2,500 homes at Sturry, Broad Oak and Hersden. (See Footnote 2.)

Westbere Parish Council's concerns about traffic congestion and air quality are also shared in the neighbouring parishes of Sturry and Fordwich.

Westbere Parish Council wrote to the managing directors of both Southeastern and Network Rail during 2018 to suggest the lengthening of platforms (copies of the correspondence is available on request, although it lacked a resolution and was dismissed by them due to a lack of funding for the necessary signal relocation requirements in the immediate and wider network area.)

We are sceptical that the Sturry Link Road and viaduct bridge **KCC/CA/0091/2019** will mitigate congestion – and certainly there will be no beneficial effect *until* implementation. Work is not scheduled to begin on this £30 million 0.9 mile bypass in autumn 2023 and end in the summer of 2025.

We also feel that the proposed link road provides poor value for money. Lengthening the platforms at Sturry will give immediate and long-lasting benefit to a great deal of residents and road users, not just in the local area but from the wider towns around. It would be better for the environment, climate change and air quality. It would also be a much cheaper alternative to mitigate traffic congestion and ease the flow of traffic.

This has been born out by the recent and current days where no trains run due to strike action – the difference in traffic flow has been amazing.

### **Recent lengthening of the platforms at Sandwich train station**

The 149<sup>th</sup> Open was due to be played at Royal St George's Golf Club in Sandwich in July 2020 (although due to COVID-19 was postponed to July 2021). In advance of this event Network Rail enhanced passenger capacity at the Sandwich station to improve the experience for the thousands of spectators expected to be travelling by train:

- Network Rail extended both platforms at the 'Dover end' of Sandwich station by 80 metres so they can fully accommodate the 12-carriage trains that will operate during The Open. This also means that the 12-carriage trains calling at Sandwich will not straddle the level crossing causing less disruption to local traffic.
- A new stepped footbridge was added to provide a link between the extended platforms along with a new walkway from the extension on platform one, to provide spectators with a more segregated and direct route towards Royal St George's Golf Club which avoids local roads and streets.

Westbere Parish Council undertook a Freedom of Information Request to Network Rail about this project in March 2020. We learned that the improvement works were paid for by both Kent County Council and Network Rail. (And KCC received funds from third parties (unknown)).

Westbere Parish Council feel that platform lengthening for a sports event lasting just 8 days and not even an annual event gives an argument that the lengthening of the Sturry platforms should be revisited.

We realise that unlike the Sandwich lengthening project, any lengthening at Sturry *will* require signal moving and that this does mean significant costs – along with software changes and announcement changes and driver training - but we feel still at a very much lower level than the £30 million plus costs (and rising) for the Sturry link road.

One of the previous Westbere parish councillors, who happened to work for Network Rail did some research around rail billing schemes. For lengthening platforms at the Sturry station:

- One platform (for trains heading in the Thanet direction) has no signal, so from research we feel the costs to lengthen would be in the region of £150k.
- The other platform (for trains travelling in the Canterbury direction) does have a signal which would need moving and which would mean that the next one to it would be quite close and so the position of that one would also need adjusting. And, in fact, any lengthening of that platform could mean 3 or even 4 signals might need adjusting. This could potentially then be a project costing a few million.
- As both up trains and down trains overlap the crossing, ideally both platforms need extending, but even lengthening just one would bring huge benefit.

Whilst the above seems to us to be the ideal solution, perhaps if for whatever reason this platform lengthening cannot be pursued at present, may the following may also be considered, explored and commented upon also, please?

- We believe the train driver stops at the 4 car mark. Can the train be stopped at a different mark. All long trains have a guard/train manager? So, the driver could get off by walking back through the train?
- Would a cheaper alternative be to move the station westward (and lengthen the platform) so that both platforms are parallel to each other and reduce the barrier time?
- Can Canterbury City Council make improvements to the Sturry station / platforms / signalling etc a priority on their Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) infrastructure projects list to ensure that this has a programmed outcome for achievement?
- Can we all, and Parliament, push for inclusion of improvements as part of the Network Rail objective of completing the East Kent Resignalling Scheme to include the proposed re-siting of signals in the vicinity of Sturry? If this could be combined with a change to the Selective Door Opening (SDO) arrangements, whereby passengers were enabled to board and alight from the rear 6 coaches only in both directions (as the newly located signals further along the route on the Up side would permit this), then the platform lengths could remain as they are and the level crossing would be clear of the rear stopping trains at all times.

We look forward to hearing from you, with your comments and an update, and hope one of you will take the lead and work with us, Network Rail, Southeastern and Canterbury City Council to move this project.

Many thanks,

Amanda Sparkes  
Clerk to the Council

**Footnote 1: Crossing closed for 17 minutes every hour:**

Southeastern railway has confirmed that the crossing is closed for approximately 17 minutes every hour and this varies between

- stopping off-peak trains (one train per hour) and
- stopping peak time trains (two trains per hour)
- and the non-stopping trains running through the crossing.

Given that Sturry is a 6-car length platform and Southeastern operate stopping trains up to 12-car in length unfortunately trains will overhang the crossing.

**Footnote 2: New housing developments:**

- 1,100 houses off the A291 given permission for land in Sturry and Broad Oak, and work is now underway. CA17/01383/OUT (Sturry) and CA/18/00868/FOS (Broad Oak).
- 539 houses off the A28 in the Canterbury District Local Plan for land North of Hersden – current application CA/22/01845 refers.
- 370 houses off the A28 – CA/21/02797 granted October 2022 for - Land to The South Of Island Road (A28) Former Chislet Colliery Hersden - Reserved matters application for phase 1 comprising access into the site together with associated infrastructure and landscaping pursuant to outline planning permission CA//16/00673/OUT.
- 270 houses off the A28 at Hoplands Farm (construction now underway)
- 80 houses off the A28 at Bredlands Lane – construction now complete.
- Current application CA/22/01648 – Hoplands Farm - Erection of foodstore with 10 residential apartments.
- Current application CA/22/01584 – Hoplands Farm, Erection of 59 dwellings with associated access, parking, amenity space and landscaping
- Housing development at Bullockstone Lane at Herne in the Canterbury District Local Plan will also impact traffic flow on the A291 towards the Sturry level crossing.
- Housing developments further East eg at Preston and if Manston Airport is developed for housing will also impact on the traffic flow on the A28 into Canterbury from the East.