

North West Cam: Public Transport Strategy Commentary

Stagecoach confirms that in addition to the material submitted on the website by the promoters as part of the evidence base to the Local Plan Review, we have had separate discussions with the promoter and their client team, to help identify and shape proposals for the development, such that they maximise the opportunity for the use of sustainable transport of all kinds, not only existing or potential future bus services.

Stagecoach is concerned that the share taken for sustainable modes is maximised, not least to ensure that added pressure on transport networks from development-related car-borne traffic does not seriously aggravate current and foreseeable congestion on the highway network across a broad area, further eroding our ability to provide reliable attractive journey options within an acceptable journey time. As we make plain elsewhere in our previous and current representations the nature of the District, which exhibits low levels of self-containment and where settlements are relatively modest in size and separated by substantial distances, the focus on maximising the use of sustainable modes, and public transport in particular, needs to be at least as great as in a more urban context.

1. Development scope

The allocation is for 650 dwellings and 5 Ha of employment. The promoters consider the site has scope to appropriately accommodate about 700 dwellings; a figure that accords with the capacity assumed by the Council in the previous “Emerging Strategy” consultation. At that stage the Council considered that a still higher quantum might be sustainably accommodated. Given the inherent sustainability credentials of the site, which is uniquely within immediate reach of a station with mainline rail service and is already served by bus services on its eastern margin, we would urge that the practical capacity of the site is made fullest use of. These credentials are well signposted by the site-specific template in the AECOM Sustainable Transport Strategy.

It is anticipated that a Primary School will be accommodated within the scheme, improving trip internalisation. A level of convenience retail would obviate the need to leave the site’s immediate vicinity to meet day-to-day needs, though we note the relative proximity of the convenience facilities available at the petrol filling station adjoining the allocation.

There has been a great deal of initial exploratory work done to understand the opportunities and the constraints on the site and accordingly, the indicative master plan has yet to evolve to something that is reasonably definitive.

As is made plain in the Sustainable Transport Strategy prepared by AECOM in support of the plan, this is a strategic node on the existing and potential bus network. The site both directly benefits from this, and will help to catalyse the delivery and longer-term sustainability of an unprecedented level of bus service that we expect we can make available on exactly these corridors, providing services to destinations to the north and south, as well as Cam and Dursley as the largest local centres of services and amenities. Cam is about 1.2 km from the centre of the site, and Dursley town centre is about another 2.5 km beyond that.

There is already a commitment to build a dedicated cycleway provision along the former Dursley branch railway formation as part of the existing Local Plan commitment now underway at North East

Cam. This is referred to in the Sustainable Transport Strategy. There are no grounds to believe that this could not be extended a very short distance across the A4135, to provide a direct dedicated active travel corridor from the site to Cam and Dursley.

2. Cam Railway Station

This station is the only intermediate stop on the local service between Bristol, Yate and Gloucester, within the District, notwithstanding long-held aspirations to open new stops at Stonehouse and Hunts Grove. Itself it is a relatively recent introduction, having been opened in 1994. The original station complex closer to the A4135 and opposite the frontage of the allocation, is currently being redeveloped for housing.

The current facility is unmanned and has exceptionally limited facilities. Greatly increasing the level of use of the station and services, including improvements to both capacity and service frequency as set out in the Sustainable Transport Study, will require extended platforms, access for non-ambulant passengers, and a greatly increased scope for interchange as well as park and ride. The small car park at the existing site cannot be extended as adjoining land is now proposed for housing.

The current very limited bus service has to negotiate Box Road which has a seriously substandard junction with the A4135, increasingly congested with traffic, greatly aggravated by parked cars. We see these difficulties are likely to increase in the short term to the point that serving the existing site with bus services will become effectively impractical.

Thus, providing station facilities directly accessible from the A4135, and providing high quality interchange and passenger facilities represents a significant opportunity and necessary initiative. Extending the current platforms substantially southwards, and providing a new station complex facing north at the southern end of these extended platforms, incorporating disabled access, would allow for very convenient access to be achieved from both Wisloe Green and current housing commitments and proposals at North East and North West Cam. This would not be dependent on any additional stopping being introduced, nor additional train paths, in the short term. Obviously, the attractiveness and relevance of the rail service, and, indeed, the scope for any bus feeder service to become relevant, would be greatly increased should rail service frequency be uplifted to every 30 minutes.

3. Transport Strategy

The key to maximise the bus mode share from the site would be to greatly enhance service frequency to at least every 30 minutes between the site and Stonehouse (thereafter potentially to Quedgeley/Gloucester), and towards Bristol via the A38, quite possibly serving Draycott and Cam first before using Tait's Hill.

A separate service to Dursley would also be likely to run at a similar frequency and scheduling overlay of common sections of service should aim as far as possible to create a core frequency of every 15 minutes between Cam, Draycott, Wilsloe and Stonehouse as the plan period runs on.

4. Urban Design

Stagecoach notes that the AECOM Sustainable Transport Strategy site template for the proposed allocation PS24 includes a principle that *“The emerging road layout would provide for public transport permeability by ensuring the ‘loop road’ through the site is designed to accommodate a bus route should this be required.”* Parts of the site extend further than 400m to the west of the A4135, providing the current bus route. This clearly represents the only realistic corridor that would sustain a high-quality direct inter-urban service. Thus, such a loop would only be appropriate to accommodate a more local service, or, perhaps, dedicated school/college bus provision. We nevertheless support the routing flexibility that this loop would offer. We would urge that all stakeholders carefully consider the design principles set out in our formal guidance document *“Bus Services and New Residential Developments”*.

Taking Dursley Road and the A4135 as the likely future focus of public transport provision, the majority of homes ought to be well within 400m of stops, and virtually all within 600m. This corridor will also accommodate the strategic cycling provision in the area, which we anticipate will be extended along the A4135 on its north side towards Wisloe Green. The points where pedestrian cycling provision crosses the A4135 are likely to align quite closely with the main vehicular accesses to the site. The intersection of the A4135 with these side access links will offer natural “nodes” that would be highly likely to provide the best possible locations for bus stop provision, incorporating high quality shelters and cycle parking.

Should any local centre be provided, we would expect it to be oriented towards the A4135, and this could act as a significant focal point for inter-modality. In addition to secure cycle parking, we would urge that the scope is identified to provide some dedicated parking spaces for “stop and drop” activity, whether by taxi or others, and which would serve to help facilitate future “last mile” services in the fullness of time.

Stagecoach is expecting to work closely with the promoters’ client team to refine and optimise the urban design approach taken and secure the wider benefits this site is likely to offer to provide effective bus advantage in the wider A38-A4135 corridor between Quedgeley, Whitminster and Cam/Dursley.

5. Delivery and Deliverability

It seems likely that this development could be brought forward quite swiftly, taking advantage of existing infrastructure. We see this potential is recognised by the Council in its housing trajectory at section 7.0 of the plan at table 6. This indicates that 50 homes would be occupied by 2025, suggesting commencements in 2024 over at least two outlets, and implying a swift start following consent shortly after the Plan is adopted. Thereafter an annualised rate of delivery of up to about 130 homes/annum is anticipated. Thus the development would be substantially complete by about 2036. Based on what is being achieved at West of Stonehouse and looking at recent performance on local outlets, this appears to be eminently achievable and if anything quite unambitious.

However, evolution of travel demand in the immediate area needs to be considered in conjunction with the existing commitments at North East Cam, which include as many as 730 units (see table below), a further 180 units proposed in this plan as an extension, and the proposed allocation at Wisloe Green for 1500 dwellings. North West Cam thus helps consolidate existing and future

demands on a single corridor along the A4135 which total potentially over 3000 new dwellings, and additional employment.

SDC Reference	Site	Number	Affordable %	Comments
S.13/0448/FUL	Land opp. 6 Box Road, Cam	71	30%	Taylor Wimpey complete
S.15/2180/OUT	"Millfields" Land North East Of Draycott, Cam	450	30%	Bathurst – Bovis on site with first phase
S.17/0964/OUT	Land off Box Road, Cam	36	100%	Aster Group awaiting reserved matters
S.18/0044/FUL	Coaley Junction Dursley Road	41	30%	Newland Homes, under construction
S.19/0810/REM	Land North West Of Box Road, Cam	90	30%	Wainhomes start imminent
S.18/2697/OUT	Land West of Station, Box Road, Cam	42	30%	HLM resolution to grant
	TOTAL	730	33%	244 affordable units

The combined rate of delivery across the additional sites added to current commitments being built out between now and 2025 is estimated conservatively at just under 300/annum. We see a great deal of evidence more broadly that this could be much faster, not least because direct access to rail service at Cam Station makes development here especially attractive to the market.

Proportionate contributions to pump-prime the bus service improvements will nevertheless be required. There would be a number of possible strategies and supporting mechanisms to effect this and we need to discuss the optimum solution to effect the best possible outcomes in line with the mobilisation of development at a suitably early stage, while also avoiding excessive costs being incurred prematurely. In particular, assessment of the appropriate scalable and phased delivery of new and improved services, which are likely to involve improved links towards the north first, needs to be agreed. Links to Stonehouse and Stroud are clearly required among other things to provide connections from those areas towards rail services to Bristol from the station from Stroud and Stonehouse, as well as links to the substantial existing and proposed employment west of Stonehouse.