

**Matter 14: Strategic Transport and Accessibility (Policies CS7 and CS8)**

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**Is the strategy based on a sound and rigorous assessment of the transport needs of South Gloucestershire**

- 1) RPS broadly agrees that the strategy is based on a sound and rigorous assessment of the transport needs of South Gloucestershire, however, it is a major concern that the Council's post submission changes to the Core Strategy introduced a need for the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood to provide contributions towards improvements to Filton Abbeywood Station (as confirmed in the supporting text to Policy CS7).
- 2) The Schedule of Post-Submission Changes (December 2012) confirms that the inclusion of this requirement within the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood Package arose as a result of updated transport modeling and feasibility work. No further explanation or evidence has been provided to justify this amendment to the Core Strategy.
- 3) Crest Strategic Projects (CSP) has controlling interests at the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood area and has worked in partnership with the Council to identify and provide for the delivery of transport infrastructure to address potential impacts from the delivery of the neighbourhood and to enhance the quality and range of transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. Throughout this process the allocation of developer contributions towards improvements to Abbeywood Station has never been discussed. Furthermore it is a concern that there is minimal up-to-date documentary evidence outlining the scale of the proposed improvements, when the improvements are required, the costs of the improvements and most importantly, how the improvements are directly related to the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood?
- 4) It is therefore submitted that the requirement for the new neighbourhood at East of Harry Stoke to contribute towards improvements to Abbeywood Station does not comply with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). Regulation 122 confirms that:

*“a planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission if the obligation is:*

  - (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
  - (b) directly related to the development; and*
  - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”*
- 5) There is a legal requirement to ensure that that above three criteria are met and it shall be outlined below that the requirement for contributions towards improvements to Abbeywood Station fails to comply with all three criteria:

**(a) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms:**

As set out in paragraph 7.7 of the Core Strategy, the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood will contribute land and financial contributions towards the North Fringe to Hengrove Package, provide stops on the North Fringe-Hengrove transit line, provide for connections and improvements to cycle/pedestrian/highway links and it will provide contributions towards the A4174 Ring Road Scheme amongst other items of infrastructure. These planning obligations will mitigate any impacts arising from the delivery of the development whilst also enhancing transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the site for the benefit of the wider area. It will result in the proposed rapid transit bus service running through the site and therefore serving the increased population at this location.

With regard to rail travel, the site is located adjoining Parkway Station which can currently be accessed from Hambrook Lane (which dissects the site) via a pedestrian bridge. If prospective residents of the new neighbourhood were to use Abbeywood Station they would have to travel a longer distance to a station that has fewer services than Parkway Station. Indeed paragraph 7.7 states that the new neighbourhood will provide “connections and improvements to the local foot and highway network to provide improved cycle and pedestrian access, as may be appropriate, particularly to Parkway Station...” (emphasis added).

Therefore it is clear that Parkway Station is the most appropriate rail station for use by future residents of the new neighbourhood and contributions towards Abbeywood Station are not required to make the new neighbourhood acceptable in planning terms.

**(b) directly related to the development;**

It is submitted that the proposed improvements to Abbeywood Station are not directly related to the site as the station is located further from the site than Parkway Station and therefore it is highly unlikely that residents of the neighbourhood will travel a longer distance to a station that provides less regular rail services than the station (Parkway) immediately adjoining the neighbourhood. As set out above, the new neighbourhood is already required to enhance links to Parkway Station and therefore it makes no sense for a single development to contribute towards two rail stations when patrons are only likely to ever use the closest station.

**(c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”**

It is not clear what the proposed improvements to the station comprise or the overall cost associated with implementing the improvements. This ambiguity is illustrated in the updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (December 2011)

which confirms that the new neighbourhood will be required to contribute towards the cost of the Stoke Gifford Transport Link and the rapid transit stops that will cost £3.4m plus land. However no cost is provided for the improvements to the Filton Abbeywood station despite it being listed in the same table.

The new neighbourhood will provide for 2,000 new homes that will be served by a rapid transit bus service and will have direct links to the adjoining Bristol Parkway Station. It is not reasonable for the neighbourhood proposals to contribute towards a station that will not be used and therefore will not be impacted upon by the new residents nor is the scale of the development sufficient to argue that there may be a modal split between Parkway and Abbeywood Stations.

- 6) Having regard to the above it is contended that the requirement for the East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood to provide contributions towards improvements to Filton Abbeywood Station fails to meet the criteria set out in CIL Regulation 122 and therefore should be removed from the proposed transport pack associated with the new neighbourhood.
- 7) Indeed the only mechanism that would justify the new neighbourhood contributing towards improvements to the station would be via an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where all relevant development in the District would proportionately contribute towards the cost of the improvements. Although it is likely that some strategic infrastructure in the District will need to be funded via S106 contributions when a CIL is in place, the tests outlined in CIL Regulation 122 would still apply.

**Is the delivery of transport initiatives in Policy CS7 realistic in view of economic uncertainties?**

- 8) The Core Strategy has been informed by extensive consultation and partnership working between the Local Planning Authority and the landowners/developers associated with the four proposed new neighbourhood areas. These neighbourhoods will play a major role in delivering or contributing towards the delivery of the transport initiatives set out in Policy CS7 and therefore it is reassuring that the major stakeholders have reached consensus and are confident that the relevant transport can be delivered.
- 9) In addition to the above, it should be noted that Government Funding has been secured for the elements of the transport infrastructure listed in the policy and it is expected that work on implementing these initiatives will accelerate once the Core Strategy is adopted and the new neighbourhood areas can come forward for development.

**South Gloucestershire Core Strategy Examination  
ID: 347713 RPS on behalf of Crest Strategic Projects**

- 10) The East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood is key in this regard as it facilitates the delivery of the Stoke Gifford Transport Link whilst also ensuring that land-use planning is integrated with transport planning.