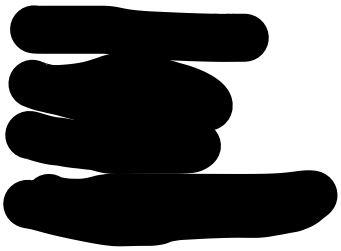
Response
To the
Rugby Borough Local Plan
Preferred Option
Consultation Document
March 2025



Contents

About our village 3
Why the focus for new building should be in Rugby and not the villages 3
New homes in Stretton on Dunsmore is the wrong location for significant new building 4
Primary concerns 6
Building on Green Belt - again 6
Flood risk 6
Other sites in the original plan 10
Infrastructure or rather the lack of infrastructure 11
The Road network 11
Sewage disposal 13
Parking and EV charging 13
Housing mix 13
The support services 14
Other concerns 14
Design 14
Other possible sites in Stretton on Dunsmore 15
The good stuff 15
The green canopy 15
Accessibility 15
Gardens and Open spaces 15
Conclusion 16

About our village

I have lived in the conservation area in the centre Stretton on Dunsmore for nearly 24 years and, like many other residents, I am very proud of our beautiful historic village and its thriving and inclusive community.

It does have a number of services that make it attractive such as a shop, pub, church, village hall, 2 playing fields and other open spaces such as the green and Platinum Plott Park and Serenity Orchard, a doctors' surgery and a "good" primary school.

What it does **not** have is a good road system with most of the access being via single carriageway lanes and most traffic has to cross the village centre, which is narrow, congested and, for the most part does not have pavements.

There have been a number of developments over the years the largest being by Bryant Homes in the 1980s, comprising Squires Rd and Roberts Close.

That is all changing since the previous Rugby Plan which, despite extensive opposition to the location, but not the basic concept of some new homes, approved 55 Homes at Squires Cross and c29 at Little Orchard. The former has been fraught with challenges and construction has only recently commenced. The latter has stalled due to access issues which were highlighted in residents and the Parish Council responses but only considered when Highways objected.

I, along with many residents, agree that we need some more homes but, given the road network and village layout, the number and location of those new homes should be to the east so that they can access the Fosse and/or the A45 without entering the centre.

Squires Cross and Little Orchard[1] are on the west side of the village where access is very restricted via single carriageway lanes or onto a dual carriageway which only goes to Coventry. To suggest building even more on that side of the village is really unreasonable unless there are going to be significant and costly changes to the road network.

That is, of course, a WCC matter but surely has to be part of the decision process.

Why the focus for new building should be in Rugby and not the villages

Nobody denies that new homes are needed right across the country but those new homes have to be in places where there is work, transport and infrastructure and where people actually want to live.

It is an easy option to target greenfield sites, many of which are in the greenbelt, for building because the cost and effort is lower, but that does not make it the right answer. We build on our countryside at our peril for if we do, it is gone forever.

[1] Already agreed as part of the previous plan

Rugby has a world famous school and unlike other towns that have grown around a school the centre of Rugby is certainly not a draw.

Rugby is supposed to be the subject of town centre regeneration, and it certainly needs it!

There are numerous derelict buildings, sites where buildings have been demolished and even the conservation area is not as attractive as it could be. Rugby needs significant investment and regeneration, principally in the town centre parts of which is shabby and run down. Even some parts of the conservation area looks unloved with unsuitable shop signage is glaring colours breaching Rugby's own guidance.

Yet Rugby town has some beautiful buildings both residential and commercial and we should be enhancing and protecting them. The large out of centre shopping parks have decimated the centre where the parking is so restrictive that small traders are struggling. Rugby clearly cannot sustain the number of commercial town centre premises, so they need to be repurposed or demolished to make way for housing. Owners need to be "nudged" into putting their sites forward if they have not already and RBC needs to release their own sites instead of building on green belt in villages. Only with massive change can Rugby fulfil its potential and become a town to be proud of and in which people want to live.

I support the proposals in the Realistic Alternative Plan that this Local Plan should increase the number of homes in greater Rugby where there is existing infrastructure and reduce the number in the villages accordingly.

Villages should only have small scale development that meets local needs and not be used a soft option to create large clusters of homes from which the residents will likely drive to their place of work, education, hospitals and for leisure activities thereby massively increasing the traffic on the road network. This will also add to pollution at a time when we are all being encouraged to be more mindful of our environment.

New homes in Stretton on Dunsmore is the wrong location for significant new building

1. There is already a development of 55 new homes currently being built and another site has outline planning for another 29 homes, an increase of nearly 100 homes in a village of just over 500 at present, a 20% increase, with no proposed investment in infrastructure. This proposal adds another nearly 200 homes so a c60% increase overall.
2. The road network, which is mainly single carriageway roads, cannot support more homes unless there is significant investment to widen the roads and change the junctions such as to the Oxford Road, Brookside to the Fosse Way and School Lane to the A45.
3. Even the two sites off the Fosse Way will require investment in a roundabout in the case of site ID81 or traffic calming for site ID 6.
4. The historic village centre has virtually no pavements and little parking even for residents let alone those using the facilities. Many journeys have to go through the centre.

5. The 3 sites in the Preferred Options paper are all in the green belt and one, site ID 134, is in prime productive agricultural land.
6. 2 of the sites (ID 81 and ID 6) are in flood zones and will need expensive and significant work to drain the land and protect the homes.
7. Many people do not want to live in a village. Village life is very different to town life, activities and entertainment are different and access to restaurants, cinemas, sports facilities etc will all require a car journey.
8. Public transport is poor, does not go where people want and need and is unreliable. Buses are regularly cancelled such as on 12 and 13 May 2025 when there was a road closed in the village. The idea that people can live in a village and rely on public transport is unrealistic unless there is huge investment.
9. Stretton on Dunsmore has experienced significant flood events and new developments, will almost certainly increase the risk.
10. There is no employment in Stretton on Dunsmore so these homes will effectively be a dormitory with residents travelling elsewhere, for everything, thereby massively increasing the number of journeys on local roads.

Primary concerns

Building on Green Belt - again

The site off Plott Lane – ID 134 - is green belt and represents productive agricultural land. It is my understanding that to remove land from the green belt for building there should be exceptional circumstances. The site currently under development by Taylor Wimpey is also green belt and, when it was approved – after much protest from the residents and Parish Council- it was stated that the boundary should mark the edge of green belt and, ergo, protect it. It is hard to justify, after such a short time, removing it from the green belt.

There are other far more suitable sites which are poorer land and/or brownfield elsewhere in the borough and, indeed, in the village such as the land off the end of School Lane near the junction with the A45.

A need for more housing, which I fully accept, does not make it acceptable to continually build on green belt just because it is easier.

Flood risk

Stretton on Dunsmore has suffered from extensive flooding and, it has become a regular occurrence in recent years. Storm Henke in January 2024 caused short lived but damaging flash floods inundating the school and 4 properties. A number of other properties along School Lane and Brookside came within feet of being flooded too and had the rain lasted just a few more minutes more property would have been damaged. Almost a year to the day the village centre and the school flooded again, although not quite as badly.



Pictures of the village centre during Storm Henke January 2024



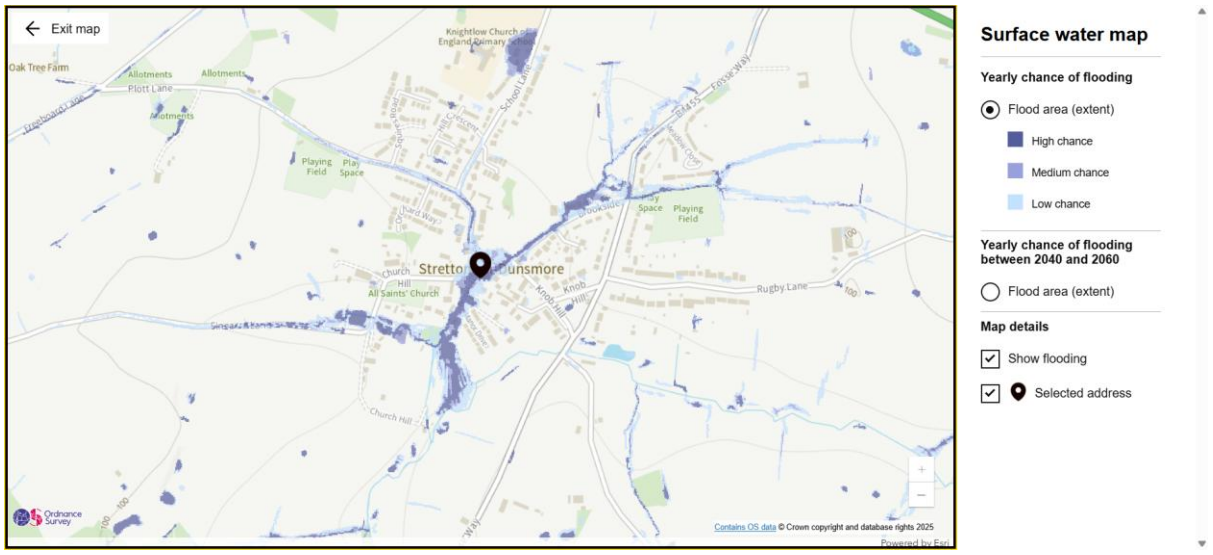
There is regular flooding on the Fosse Way close to the junction with Brookside, but the worst occurrence was during Storm Henke and the road had to close.



The junction of Fosse Way and Brookside during Storm Henke January 2024.

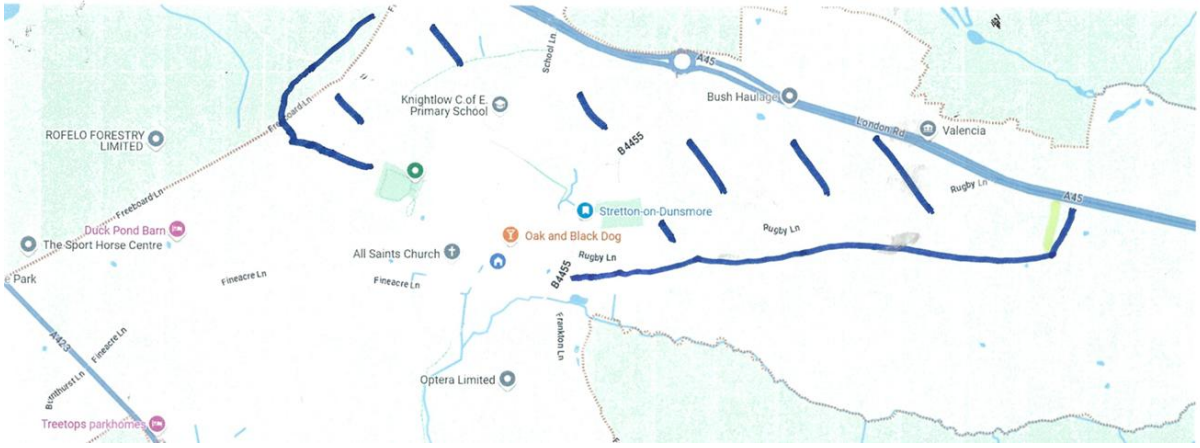
There was a perception that the water that flooded the village centre came down Brookside and the brook from the fields behind the Fosse Playing field and down the lanes. Some also came down Plott Lane and School Lane as well as Church Hill.

WCC produced a report following Storm Henke [2] and page 31 details the problems that occurred in Stretton on Dunsmore. The map from the Environment Agency shows that several parts of the village are at a high risk of flooding from surface water. The centre is in a bowl at the confluence of several lanes all of which funnel down towards the village green and brook.



However, recent investigation reveals that there is an extensive network of drains and ditches from fields above and around the village which cover a wide area – see map below. Those drains cross several fields and converge in a field and pond at the top of Brookside in an area known as Well Head. That water then feeds into the brook or, at times of high rainfall down the roads and lanes into the centre of the village.

[2] https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-453486374-190



Whilst it is true that some water that collected at the Fosse Way junction came off the fields and playing field, the majority of the flood water came from elsewhere and the volume was such that it backed up through the drain onto the Fosse Way. This can be seen when the flooding is less severe as it bubbles up onto the road from the field behind Well Head. The water was also so great that it overwhelmed the brook and ran down Brookside into the village centre threatening virtually every home and inundated 3 of them.



The railing outside the shop showing the volume of water coming down Brookside. It was over 2 feet deep and flowing so fast it was not safe to stand in it.

One of the sites (site ID 81) in the plan is very badly drained, in fact, it has marsh grass and even lying water even when there has been little or no rain for days. In the early weeks of March 2025, when it had not rained for over 10 days, the landowner has been digging ditches and trenches to try to drain the land and those ditches appear to be being joined to an already overloaded and poorly maintained land drainage system.

Given that it is now known that the myriads of land drains feed the brook, and the incidence of heavy rain is more frequent, I already had concerns about building above and around the village. The site 81 is only going to add to the problem unless significant mitigating action is put in place. That said, from the point of view of access and proximity to the village centre, school and other services, site 81 is the best of the 2 recommended.

In the last iteration of the plan the developer proposed a terrace of cottages, not dissimilar to those in the village centre, around a green and pond. The pond would be critical to alleviate the drainage but would also add to the village aesthetic and likely be positively viewed by residents.

IF RBC is minded to approve site 81 a comprehensive water management strategy will be critical.



The other 2 sites have similar issues.

Site ID 6 is on a known flood area being in a dip and on the banks of another stream that joins the brook just downstream from the village. A new culvert has been built by Severn Trent at the junction of Frankton Lane and the Fosse Way but there is a fallen tree in the brook and there is still an issue with the flow of water. The landowner has said that he has not offered the site, so it is strange that it is included.

Site ID 134 is on greenbelt farmland which is largely clay soil. Residents backing onto the site have all bought land some 20 years ago and increased their gardens and they all report serious drainage issues such that the land is too wet to walk on in winter. There are issues when it rains heavily with water pouring off that field and a waterfall running into Plott Lane just above the junction with Squires Rd at the back of the old Methodist Chapel. It now appears that there are almost certainly land drains from all that land (including that already under development) and it is questionable whether the SUDs Pond being constructed as part of the current development will be in any way adequate to stem the flow of water such that it does not inundate the village centre.

The ”vision” document submitted by Taylor Wimpey allows for an additional pond – which is large, but the site is on a significant slope. It is unclear how that will be managed.

I gave evidence about flooding at the Inquiry on the previous plan and despite all the evidence RBC ignored the concerns of residents and Severn Trent and Highways have done nothing about drainage and flooding. The issue is only going to get worse.

I urge RBC to conduct an extensive investigation and review of the drainage, including agricultural land drains in order to reduce the current risk of flooding. At the same time, they must reconsider whether these sites are even suitable on the basis of flooding.

Other sites in the original plan

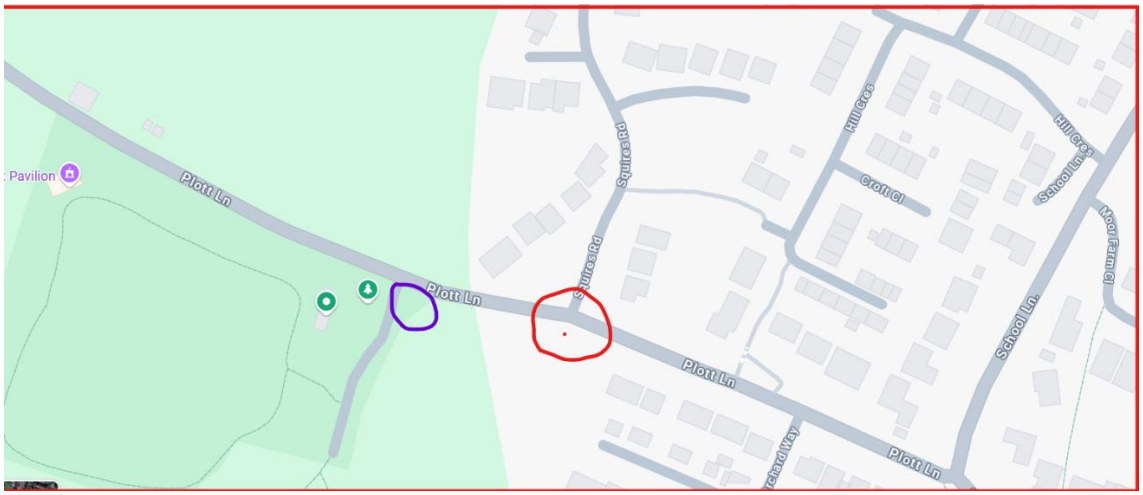
A site on Plott Lane, known as Little Orchard, adjacent to the playing field and opposite Squires Rd was included in the previous plan. It has outline planning permission, but progress stalled because of access.

The access to the site is adjacent to that to the Plott Lane playing field car park owned by the Parish Council. It is also accessed from a single carriageway road (Plott Lane) and the entrance would be almost opposite Squires Rd, the same road used to access Squires Cross with c40 existing and 55 homes under construction.

Highways objected to the use of the existing access and the, then, developer proposed using the car park which was roundly rejected by the Parish Council.



The entrance to the Little Orchard site is shown to the left of the entrance to the Plott Lane playing field car park. This entrance was later rejected by Highways.



The blue circle is the current entrance and the red would be better – if the matter with British Gas can be resolved.

We understand that there is a gas main running along the verge in front of this site which resulted in British Gas refusing access further along although it is not clear exactly where that gas main is located. The safest access would be opposite Squires Rd and to turn that into a mini roundabout, a dogleg would be very unsafe.

There is a no access from Orchard Way but, conceivably were a house on Orchard Way to become available access could be achieved from there.

If that cannot be resolved that site needs to be withdrawn but, that was a site that was generally supported by residents as suitable as long as safe access could be achieved. However, if RBC does proceed with the development off Plott Lane Little Orchard definitely needs to be cancelled.

Infrastructure or rather the lack of infrastructure

The Road network

Stretton on Dunsmore is a large rural settlement which is why it is always considered to be a suitable target for development. However, unlike many villages of its size the road network is more commensurate with that of a small village.

Whilst the Fosse Way does run past the village, and there are houses to the east side, most of the existing housing, and all the proposed housing, is to the west.

The site 81 will have to exit onto the Fosse Way at a known accident location where there is currently a chicane. That chicane is regularly demolished by speeding cars. There will need to be significant alterations to the road, perhaps even a roundabout, to provide a safe junction onto what is already a very busy road.

The village itself has few pavements and is mainly served by single carriageway roads being, Freeboard Lane, Frankton Lane, Knob Hill, Plott Lane and Brookside which is effectively single lane due to parked cars. School Lane carries 2-way traffic but exits onto the A45 in the direction of Coventry so unless vehicles are going to Coventry (and it is virtually impossible to get onto the A45 at busy times) vehicles will go through the village centre or turn right onto Plott Lane.

Vehicles from site 134 will either join the site currently under construction exiting down Squires Rd onto Plott Lane or, as currently planned[3], join directly onto Plott Lane as well. Squires Rd and Roberts Close currently have 40 homes and the Squires Cross site will have 55.

Thus, there will be vehicles to and from 95 homes already coming up and down Squires Rd. If the exit currently shown on the plan – onto Plott Lane – is approved[4], it will be onto a single lane road which currently has a speed limit of 60mph. Site 134 is targeted for 125 homes and that will conservatively result in iro 200+ more vehicles plus delivery vans and visitors.

Either of those junctions are opposite the children's playground at the Plott Lane playing field and the Platinum Plott Park as well as the Serenity Garden.

[3] As set out in the Taylor Wimpey documentation
[4] The Taylor Wimpey "vision" shows a road sweeping round from Squires Rd and back onto Plott Lane.

Plott Lane is a 2-way road to the left of Squires Rd but only a single lane to the right and traffic to Leamington and Coventry will turn right. Plott Lane then joins Freeboard Lane, also a single-track road leading to the Oxford Road. Freeboard Lane is already a mess with few passing places and has been severely damaged by the HGVs visiting Ryton Heath Farm which is an industrial wood chipping plant currently operating, it is believed, without planning permission.

To add another 125 homes to the already 55 already under construction, with the accompanying traffic will be dangerous and hugely disruptive unless significant, and costly, changes are made to the road network on that side of the village.

It is all very well to say RBC wants to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport but the reality is that the public transport is poor to non-existent and costly. It does not go where people want and it finishes too early.

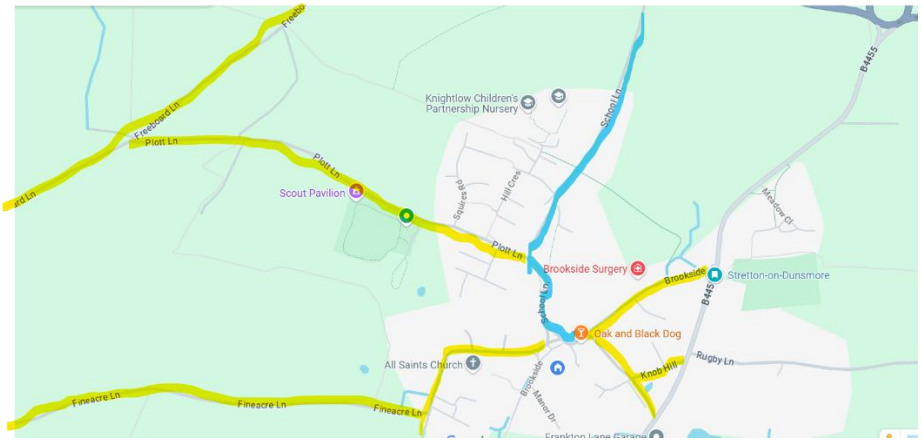


The children from the church school regularly attend services at All Saints Church walking down through the village. There are no pavements on the part of the route through the centre. This is already dangerous and will get worse.

The road network which is narrow and mostly without pavements is too dangerous for walking and, in any case, it is too far to walk to most people's place of work, entertainment or shop. As for cycling, most cycling is for leisure not to get to work, school or for shopping it is for cycling clubs!

RBC needs to be realistic. Most of these dwellings will need to have probably 2 or more cars, parking places and a suitable road network. They will have visitors, deliveries and everything that goes with a community.

The existing road network just cannot support this level of increase. I urge Rugby Borough Council to reject the site at Squires Cross on the grounds of safety and access and remove the site at Little Orchard for the same reason.



The roads marked in yellow are single track and that in blue is the only 2 way road.

Site 81 is only viable if a roundabout is constructed on the Fosse to provide safe access.

Sewage disposal

The sewage from Stretton on Dunsmore all goes down a main sewer to the pumping station between Stretton and Princethorpe. That pumping station has regularly released raw sewage into Princethorpe Brook. It has a licence to do in times of heavy rain, but this has been happening even when there is no rain. In any case, releasing raw sewage into a watercourse is unacceptable and it is debateable whether the sewers can cope with more effluent, particularly from site ID 134, unless major works are undertaken. Just connecting to an existing Victorian sewer, which is a combined sewer, is irresponsible.

Parking and EV charging

People will not use public transport to and from Stretton, they will need cars and for those cars they will need parking. Each home is likely to have at least1 car if not 2. Many will have 3, especially those for families. Furthermore, people have visitors, and it is dangerous to provide insufficient parking such that cars are then parked on the roads. It is already an issue for existing homeowners in Squires Rd many of which have insufficient off-street parking.

In a world where the use of Electric Vehicles is encouraged, or, in due course required, off street parking will become evermore important as will EV charging for homeowners.

I urge RBC to ensure cars can be safely parked and have access to EV charging.

Housing mix

Stretton has an aging population, many of the older residents do not want to leave the village and some would like to downsize into more suitable and easier to manage accommodation and the proposal that new homes should be adaptable for older and/or disabled residents is welcome.

Previously, in the last plan, the developer looking at the Fosse site (81) proposed a village green with a pond (to drain all that water) and a terrace of cottages suitable for first time buyers and/or older residents downsizing. That would be very welcome.

Developers always want to build family homes so that they can maximise their investment but that is not what Stretton needs. We have a lot of those, we need smaller homes so that the family homes, currently occupied by single people, can be released to families.

The support services

The school is popular, as is the doctors' surgery and people come from elsewhere to use them. Even with the 55 houses under construction it is likely that some of those people will have to use services elsewhere, creating more car journeys.

The village hall cannot cope with existing demand. The village centre is congested with a shortage of parking as many of the homes have little or no off-street parking and the church, village hall, shop and one remaining pub have little or none of their own.

The plan provides for another children's playground – we already have 2 so that is not really needed but it does not provide for anything else. We need things like a bigger village hall or a hall suitable for sports and scouts. It is to be hoped that funds will be made available for that.

There is no mention of any extension to the school, which will be critical. Last time the suggestion was that children from outside the village (only about 45% of pupils actually live in Stretton) would have to go elsewhere. Is that really feasible?

Other concerns

Design

Stretton is an historic village with a pretty conservation area. It would be nice if developers proposed housing that will enhance the village by providing attractive homes that draw people to want to live here. The current plans for Squires Cross from Taylor Wimpey are dull, run of the mill modern homes, packed in together with few redeeming features. Whilst the "vision" document does provide for some open space it needs far more in the way of trees and walkways so that residents could easily walk safely to other parts of the village. That would, of course, reduce the density of housing.

Sadly, once outside the centre the styles of housing that has been built in the '60s and '70s is such that whilst it is replicated across the Midlands and, in some cases, across the country, it is not particularly innovative.

If new homes were designed to enhance the village rather than just be another dull, run of the mill, housing estate there would likely be less opposition.

The current development by Taylor Wimpey at Squires Cross may provide new homes but they will not be special or unusual and yet, in Wolston, Spitfire Homes are building homes to be proud of. In the Cotswolds and Banbury for example, the planners there have clearly required developers to submit and build designs in keeping with the locality.

Equally, many of the homes at Houlton Village are attractive, varied and sit well in the environment.

I urge RBC to insist that developers raise the standard of design and landscaping for any development in Stretton on Dunsmore.

Other possible sites in Stretton on Dunsmore

When RBC put out the call for site a number of landowners came forward. The preferred options plan did not provide any information on the other sites although a map was shown at the "roadshow".

There were several sites shown on that map off School Lane and off The Fosse/A45 any of which would be more accessible than those that have made the shortlist.

The good stuff

The green canopy

Stretton on Dunsmore is in a rural location and has 2 playing fields and children's play areas and also the Platinum Plott and Serenity Garden which, in time, will be used for burials as that was its original purpose.

The proposal that developers must include trees in their developments is welcome but in a countryside location there need to be more and an undertaking that no existing trees will be removed.

Accessibility

The requirement that homes should be capable of adaptation for accessibility is welcome. Many older and/or disabled people need properties that they can live in and adapt should their mobility be impaired.

Gardens and Open spaces

Access to green spaces is vital for the wellbeing of everyone and personal outside space is very important. It does need to be of a reasonable size, particularly for homes targeted at families.

As stated above Stretton does have several parks and playgrounds and these are well used. Other smaller green spaces in amongst housing on Squires Rd, Meadow Close, Croft Close and Hill Crescent are important too. Parents want their young children to be able to play outside within sight and in their own gardens, so it is important that all homes have access to safe enclosed spaces.

Conclusion

The bulk of the new homes under the Rugby Local Plan should be centred on Rugby Town and not the villages. The villages can take, and probably need, some smaller developments but many of them are already being increased anyway. They do not necessarily have the road network or other services capable of absorbing and supporting large development, Stretton on Dunsmore certainly does not.

Rugby has the sites, derelict and empty buildings and waste land ripe for development all of which would make it a more attractive town. Right now it is not.

Notwithstanding the fact that Stretton on Dunsmore is a large rural settlement it's restricted road network, flooding problems and difficulty in accessing major roads (unless there are significant changes) makes it unsuitable for another major housing development.