

Appendix VII:**The potential impact of a new railway line from Okehampton to Plymouth.**

Talks at a national and regional level have been going on about the possibility of opening up, along the old route, a rail line between Okehampton and Plymouth as an alternative to the present section of the London to Plymouth line which runs along the coast between Exeter and Newton Abbot.¹ This section runs beside the sea wall and has been subject to damage during winter storms.

There is also a predicted future shortfall in capacity on the existing line for freight traffic.

Talks on the need for additional freight capacity has led regional leaders to consider the opening up of a new rail link to Plymouth as a real possibility within the next 20 years and outline plans are being drawn up.²

It is envisaged that there would be a station at Okehampton which would primarily be for use by freight whilst a Parkway station within Sourton parish would provide easy access for a large part of north Devon and Cornwall as well as those living much closer in West Devon; with good access to Sourton from the A30 and the A386.³

If this option comes to fruition it could potentially have a big impact on the parish of Sourton where the Parkway Station would be sited. Although the exact site has not been confirmed we understand the most likely site to be at Sourton Down near to the track to Prewley Farm.

Because of the geography of the existing line which falls within the boundary of Dartmoor National Park, it is likely that any new station built at Sourton Down would also lie within the DNP boundary. Dartmoor National Park Authority has already written a scoping report and given a cautious welcome to a possible new line.⁴

The Neighbourhood Plan looks forward to 2031, and it is quite possible that action on a new line could start within that time frame. It is important then that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to consider what the implications might be if there was a new rail link and how we wish to address those issues.

Development in years 10-15 years of the NP

It is accepted that if within the next 10-15 years that the railway line is opened up through Sourton that there will be additional pressure to build further homes, as Sourton becomes a potential location that can provide an easy commuter ride for those working in both Plymouth and Exeter.

However building a lot more houses on the edge of an already 'unsustainable village' will just exacerbate the problem. Building houses on prominent land will also ruin the beautiful setting that makes this area so attractive to visitors.

Any additional housing in the Sourton Village/Sourton Down area will only be considered, if and when the new railway line is opened to the public, and this will need to be carried out through a joint review of the Neighbourhood Plan by Bridestowe and Sourton Parish Councils. The Dartmoor National Park Authority

¹ Source to be provided by Michael Ireland

² source to be provided by Michael Ireland

³ Source to be provided by Michael Ireland

⁴ Devon Main Line Route Options. DNPA Scoping report July 2015.

policies in relation to Landscape Impact/visual intrusion will remain relevant, as will Bridestowe & Sourton's own Visual Impact Statement (see Appendix V).

It is not possible to foresee exactly what will happen in the future, but it is reasonable to assume that unless tourism as an industry has declined dramatically, the overall need to develop in a sympathetic way within the landscape is highly likely to prevail. Thus it is not envisaged that Sourton Down and Sourton Village are suitable locations for significant future residential development following the introduction of the railway, other than to continue to provide further small scale low cost housing.

Close working with Dartmoor National Park Authority will help make sure that any new (small) developments are entirely appropriate in design and location and accord with their policies of resisting developments that have a major visual impact from open access land within the DNP boundary.⁵

Building elsewhere in the parishes

The lack of development at Sourton Down/ Sourton village could lead to other parts of the two parishes coming under pressure for further development.

The same assumptions about the future ongoing importance of tourism to the local economy (as described above) would apply, as would the need for low cost/affordable/ well designed homes rather than for larger dwellings, which already makes up the majority of the existing housing stock within the two parishes. (See Chapter 1, and the 2011 Census).

Big developments away from settlements would have a negative impact on the local landscape and could have a real and negative impact on Bridestowe and Sourton as a destination for tourists, and thus have an impact on local jobs many of which are linked to the tourism industry.⁶ Given WDBC's appraisal of Sourton as an 'unsustainable community' and Bridestowe as only one category higher⁷, to make those communities more sustainable any additional growth not envisaged in the B & S plan would need to be at the heart of each village.

The presumption against development outside the boundary settlements of both villages is therefore highly likely to remain relevant throughout the 15-year plan.

The first 10 years of the B & S's Development Plan

Bridestowe and Sourton's NP follows guidelines set out in WDBC's and DNP's Strategic Planning documents. Both of these documents do not foresee any development within Sourton Down or Sourton Village as both are considered as 'unsustainable' having no shops, post office, school or commercial outlets.⁸ Details of our proposals for new housing numbers (the great majority of which will be in Bridestowe Village) are given in Chapter 5.

⁵ DNP Strategic Plan

⁶ Census

⁷ WDBC Strategic Review 2011 and draft Our Plan

⁸ WDBC Strategic Plan and DNP Strategic Plan