

ALL STRETTON VILLAGE SOCIETY

WATERWORKS SURVEY

Description and overview

The survey was developed in a bid to gauge the strength of feeling of All Stretton residents about the outline planning application to develop the Montgomery Waters site located between All Stretton and Church Stretton on the B5477.

Respondents were presented with eight statements and for each they were asked to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, slightly disagreed, were neutral, slightly agreed or strongly agreed.

Two hundred surveys were distributed to residents in All Stretton alongside the village newsletter on or after 1st April 2024, with a requested return date of 3rd April, although surveys received up until 8th have been included. Despite the very tight turnaround 73 completed surveys were received – 37%- which is a very high response rate and statistically significant.

Results

The accompanying chart gives the detailed results, with each bar representing 100% of respondents' answers. Dark green and light green show strongly and slightly agree respectively, amber represents neutral whilst light and dark red are slightly and strongly disagree.

Overall, across all questions, 96% of respondents positively agreed with statements which were opposed to the expansion of the waterworks and the construction of a lorry park, whilst 1% positively disagreed with any of the statements. (3% were neutral about one or more statements). Whilst the individual statements will be explored below, it is totally apparent that the overwhelming majority of All Stretton residents are opposed to the development proposals.

Question 1 – Preservation of countryside outside of the town

The proposed development is located in countryside within an AONB (National Landscape) and as such any development can only be permitted in 'exceptional circumstances'. The preservation of this landscape lies at the centre of the town's strategy to build within the development boundary, and protect the countryside around the town. Question 1 sought to test the support for this proposition with **97% of respondents agreeing that 'preservation of the countryside outside of the town is the most important planning consideration.'**

Question 2 – Separate identities for towns and villages

This issue has always featured strongly in previous surveys, and with 99% of respondents agreeing that 'maintaining separate identities for the town and the surrounding villages is very important' this survey builds on that consistent assertion. Residents are completely opposed to any development between communities in the Strettons which could create a

contiguous conurbation recognising that to allow the creation of a ribbon development would destroy the distinction of each community.

Question 3 – Protecting and enhancing biodiversity

Local residents know that the valley floor which extends north of the town is a rich cornucopia of wildlife, with many protected species not addressed by the ecological report submitted in support of the proposals. These omissions are addressed in separate submissions to Shropshire Council.

It is hardly surprising that 99% of respondents agreed that **‘Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is critical in an AONB’** with no one disagreeing.

Question 4-Protecting designated and other heritage assets from vehicle induced vibration is very important

The vehicles currently used to transport bottled water from the site typically weigh 44 tonnes, the maximum permitted. To reach the site they have to navigate narrow lanes and streets with protected and listed buildings which are susceptible to damage from high volumes of heavy vehicles. 95% of residents agreed that **‘Protecting designated and other heritage assets from vehicle induced vibration is very important.’**

Question 5 – Preventing danger to roadusers

The roads extending north of the village past Gorsty Bank along the B5477 and on to the A49 are narrow and have no pedestrian paths. It is already difficult for two vehicles to pass, and when two large vehicles meet, for example a lorry and a school bus, much careful manouvering is required. No estimates of vehicle movement numbers are included in the outline application, but the development of a new bottling plant must result in an increase in lorry journeys. When the statement **‘Preventing danger and conflict with pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and other vulnerable road users is of the highest importance’** was presented to residents 99% agreed with one neutral. In a rural community, where little money is allocated to road maintenance and to fixing potholes, the prospect of heavy lorries speeding along minor roads was an issue of universal concern to residents.

Question 6 – Creation of employment should never outweigh the protection of the countryside

The outline proposal does not detail the number of local jobs, if any, which will result from the development. Further, it makes no reference to the impact of employment lost within the tourist industry in the parish arising from damage caused by the development. The survey respondents clearly recognise the importance of local employment, and although 89% agree with the statement **‘Creation of employment should never outweigh the protection of the countryside,’** only 69% strongly agreed, the lowest figure of the eight questions. Conversely, only 1% strongly disagreed.

Question 7 – Use of brownfield sites should be prioritised

Not one resident disagreed with the statement that the **‘Use of brownfield sites should be prioritised,** and 99% agreed that the strategy being pursued in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan to build the homes needed on brownfield sites inside the town is the correct way

forward. This position has been supported by all previous surveys and was the conclusion of the Housing Needs Survey in November 2022 (updated 2024).

Question 8 – Visual amenity is important to the town's economy

100% of respondents agree with the statement '**Visual amenity is important to the town's economy.**' The outline proposal hints that so desperate are rural economies for local employment that a bit of development is fine providing it brings a few jobs, but in an area of outstanding beauty spoiling that beauty is akin to killing the goose which lays the golden egg. The development will be clearly visible from Caer Caradoc and the likely light pollution at night will be catastrophic to both wildlife and to dark skies. 13 different types of bats have been regularly recorded in the valley where the proposed lorry park will go – hardly surprising given the proximity to water and their feeding habits. Two other species - one plant and one insect identified in this valley in the past year have never been recorded elsewhere in Shropshire.

Summary and conclusions

Church Stretton and its wider parish are noted for its beauty, its environment, its biodiversity, its geology and its hills, and protecting and preserving this for visitors, residents and future generations is the number one priority of residents. Time after time. In fact, every time they are asked. It is not for nothing that in 2024 ABTA identified the South Shropshire hills, with Church Stretton at its heart, as one of the top 10 tourist destinations in the **world**, the first time it has chosen a UK destination in its top 10.

The community works hard to achieve this, volunteering to maintain its nature reserves and common land, and the Housing Needs Survey and emerging Neighbourhood Plan seek to weave the new housing necessary into this protected landscape by prioritising the use of brownfield sites.

This proposed development trashes all of the above, and it is no wonder that the residents of All Stretton, who have worked to maintain the countryside and to preserve the local wildlife, realise the damage which the proposed lorry park and bottling plant will cause. This viewpoint has been emphatically recorded by this survey. The bottling plant and lorry park are not compatible with existence of the AONB. It will disrupt the parish, spoil the countryside, damage tourism and jobs and should not be permitted.

ASVS Waterworks Survey 2024

