

# SADBERGE PARISH PLAN



## NOTES OF THE OPEN MEETING HELD IN SADBERGE VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2006

1. This Open Meeting addressed the issues of Traffic and Transport.
2. There were 61 names on the attendance sheet.

As well as local residents, the following people were present:-

- Brian Jones                      Ward Councillor for Sadberge & Whesoe
- Sue Dobson                      Principal Transport Policy Officer, Darlington Borough Council
- Dave Winstanley              Traffic Management & Road Safety Manager, Darlington Borough Council
- Michael Straugheir          Traffic Management Officer, Durham Constabulary

3. Millie Scaife, the Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Group, welcomed those present and gave an introduction to the topics for discussion.

### Transport

4. Alastair Mackenzie gave an introductory presentation on the issue of transport. A copy of the presentation is available on the Sadberge web site at [www.sadberge.org.uk](http://www.sadberge.org.uk).

From the Parish Plan questionnaires:-

- 86% of respondents said that the loss of the bus service to Sadberge would have a Large or Very Large impact on the village society.
- The impact of a poor bus service is felt mainly by the younger (i.e. under 18) and older (i.e. over 65) residents. A high percentage of residents in these age ranges feel "locked in" to Sadberge.
- A significant minority of Sadberge residents (11%) do not have access to a car.

Arriva withdrew their No. 98 bus service from Sadberge at the end of April 2006. There are now two bus services – at approximately 2-hour intervals – through Sadberge during the daytime on weekdays, but there are no services in the evenings or on Sundays.

Darlington Borough Council is currently carrying out a review of its support for local bus services.

5. The following points were made during the discussion:-
  - Following the reduction of the frequency of minor ailments surgeries in Sadberge Village Hall (from two per week to one per week), a lot of village residents will need to travel to the doctor's surgery in Middleton St. George. There is currently no suitable bus service.
  - The No. 17 bus spends a lot of time waiting between runs. Would it be possible for it to run more frequently during the day.
  - It is now more difficult for people to come to Sadberge by bus. Up to twenty people per week used to come to the Buck Inn by bus. The lack of a proper bus service encourages drinking and driving.
  - One of the Buck Inn's cleaners has had to give up his or her job because he or she cannot get to Sadberge at a weekend.
  - The current bus services start too late for people needing to get to work or college.
  - As well as a service between Sadberge and Middleton St. George, we need a bus service that runs:-
    - Earlier in the morning and later into the early evening so that people can get to work and back again.
    - More frequently during the day.

- During evenings (including late buses) so that young people can get to and from social activities in Darlington and elsewhere.

All of these are priorities.

- Sue Dobson will look into the details of the No. 17 bus operating schedule and get back to the Parish Council. **ACTION:** Sue Dobson
- Why were villagers not consulted about the appropriate timings of the No. 17 bus service?
- There is no point in issuing pensioners' bus passes unless there is a proper bus service.
- The taxi voucher scheme is not working for Sadberge residents because taxis are unwilling to come out to Sadberge.
- Would it be possible to subsidise Arriva to divert their buses through Sadberge on the way between Darlington and Stockton?
- Would it be possible to package attractive routes with less attractive routes when operating licences are being issued?
- How are students from rural areas going to get to the new college in Darlington? There are not enough parking spaces at the new college to accommodate students and staff, and parking at the college is expensive.
- There is a marked inequality of services in Darlington and the rural areas.

6. Sue Dobson made the following points:-

- The Borough Council is under a legal obligation to issue bus passes, which are part-funded by central government.
- Darlington Borough Council's expenditure on supported bus services has increased over the last few years. Passenger numbers have decreased year on year over the last decade. This, together with increases in fuel and labour costs, means that services that used to be commercially viable are no longer viable. This has caused commercial operators to withdraw bus services, and further reductions in commercial bus services are likely.
- Supported bus services are not allowed to compete with commercial services.
- Darlington Borough Council does not licence bus operators or bus services. Its only control of bus services is through contracts for supported services.

### Traffic

7. Alastair Mackenzie gave an introductory presentation on the issue of traffic through Sadberge. A copy of the presentation is available on the Sadberge web site at [www.sadberge.org.uk](http://www.sadberge.org.uk).

From the Parish Plan questionnaires:-

- 71% of respondents identified **traffic volume** as a Significant or Major problem.
- 78% identified **traffic speed** as a Significant or Major problem.
- 77% support the idea of having a 20 mph speed limit in the centre of the village.

From the traffic survey:-

- The traffic through the central crossroads peaks at a little over 1,200 vehicles per hour during the busy periods. That is one vehicle every 3 seconds.
- There was a significant increase in the traffic in Sadberge between 1997 and 2004, and the high volume of traffic has been maintained since then.

Diagnosis:-

- Sadberge is being used as a "rat run" by north-south traffic trying to avoid the congestion round the edge of Darlington.
- Sadberge is being used by drivers wanting to avoid the dangerous right turn on to the A66 at Long Newton.
- Middleton Road between Middleton and Sadberge is being used by drivers wanting to avoid congestion at the Morton Park roundabout.

8. The following points were made during the discussion:-

- Quality of life in Sadberge is being eroded by the volume and speed of traffic through the village.
- It is only by fortune that there have not been personal injury accidents in Sadberge. Is it going to take a fatality before Darlington Borough Council takes action?
- Judging by the glass that appears on the road at the junction of Stockton Road and Norton Road, there are frequent collisions there.
- Installing Rippleprint on Middleton Road and Hill House Lane was a waste of time and money.
- There should be chicanes on the main through roads, with priority going to traffic heading out of the village.
- There are chicanes in Carlton and Hurworth.
- Funding for traffic calming in Sadberge was promised when the grade separated junction was built on the A66. What has happened to that money?
- Would it be possible to make Sadberge a "no through road" village by closing Hill House Lane (near the NCDL kennels) and Norton Back Lane?
- There should be a 7.5 te weight restriction (except for access) throughout Sadberge.
- Heighington has a weight restriction except for access.
- Even though there are difficulties in enforcing weight restrictions that have an "except for access" condition, the majority of HGV drivers would respect a properly-signed weight restriction. Targeted action could be taken to deal with any persistent offenders.
- It would be possible to define a weight restriction zone that would prevent unnecessary HGV traffic through Sadberge while allowing appropriate access to local businesses, etc. Sadberge Parish Council will draw up a proposal and submit it to Darlington Borough Council.

**ACTION:** Sadberge Parish Council /  
Alastair Mackenzie

- The proposed modifications to the Morton Park roundabout will only affect traffic turning left off the north-bound A66. They will not tackle the congestion that is causing drivers to divert through Sadberge instead of using the A66 bypass.
- Would a zebra crossing on Middleton Road slow down the traffic coming into the village?
- In the short term, there is a need for enforcement of the speed limits in Sadberge.
- Michael Straugheir has asked Darlington Borough Council to provide traffic speed data so that he can prepare a problem profile that identifies the days and times when speeding is a particular problem. The data will be collected using "black boxes". Once the problem profile has been drawn up, enforcement action will be scheduled as appropriate.

9. Dave Winstanley made the following points:-

- Darlington Borough Council's road safety funding from central government needs to be targeted on reducing personal injury accidents. At present, Sadberge has a good accident record by this measure.
  - It would be worth looking at the new Local Transport Plan to see if there are other sources of funding that could be applied to tackling the issue of traffic in Sadberge.
- ACTION:** Alastair Mackenzie
- Work on the grade-separated interchange on the A66 at Long Newton is due to start in April 2007.
  - Darlington's success in attracting business and employment has led to an increase in traffic. The town is now near grid-locked during the morning rush hour.
  - Work on the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor will start in January 2007 and will take 12 - 15 months.
  - Steps will also be taken to improve the flow of traffic through Darlington. For example, phasing traffic lights to avoid stop-start traffic.
  - Chicanes cost about £5,000 - £6,000 each to install. The technical feasibility of chicanes would need to be investigated. It is important that the chicanes do not themselves create a hazard.
  - Darlington Borough Council and the police would investigate the possibility of putting in chicanes if Sadberge paid for them.

- The road markings and the large signs that are needed for chicanes would contribute to "sign clutter". It is undesirable to have too many road signs in a village like Sadberge.
- Darlington Borough Council's approach to traffic calming in Sadberge has nothing at all to do with the expansion of Durham Tees Valley Airport.
- Dave will provide Sadberge Parish Council with guidance on traffic calming.

**ACTION:** Dave Winstanley

10. Michael Straugheir made the following points:-

- Nationally, traffic volume is increasing at about 2% per annum.
- The signage for the current plug weight restriction on Hill House Lane is correct.
- One problem is that satellite navigation systems do not take account of weight restrictions, so they often direct heavy goods vehicles through restricted zones. The people providing mapping for satellite navigation systems do not seem to be interested in adding information about weight restrictions.
- There would be difficulties in enforcing a weight restriction "except for access".
- Central government guidelines do not allow a 40 mph buffer zone on Hill House Lane to the north of Sadberge. The stretch of road outside the village boundary does not fit any of the criteria for a reduced speed limit.
- The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) policy is that 20 mph zones / speed limits should be self enforcing.
- 20 mph speed limits are not appropriate on through routes.

General

11. It was pointed out that the credibility of the Sadberge Parish Plan depends on positive action being taken to address the issues raised at the Open Meetings.

**Alastair Mackenzie**