

= Strensham services =

Strensham services is a motorway service station on the M5 in Worcestershire , England . In August 2011 , it was rated as 4 stars (southbound) and 3 stars (northbound) by quality assessors at Visit England .

Unusually for a motorway service station , the two sites are about half a mile apart due to the proximity of junction 8 (for the M50 motorway) . The services opened with the motorway in 1962 and have undergone many developments over time , largely due to the evolution of the motorway , which at the time of its opening ran from Birmingham to Strensham but now runs to Exeter some 100 miles southwards . It was the first service station on the M5 .

= = History = =

The original service station opened with the M5 and M50 motorways in November 1962 , though none of the original buildings survive in use . The M5 , which was built with dual two @-@ lane carriageways , was extended southwards , from junction 8 in 1969 , with dual three @-@ lane carriageways . It was widened between junctions 3 and 8 to dual three @-@ lane carriageways in the early 1990s including a remodelling of junction 8 (M50) . The proximity of the northbound area to the remodelled junction would have caused issues with traffic trying to join and leave the motorway and so it was relocated half a mile to the north on a new larger site in 1991 . The exit from the southbound services has been altered to feed directly into the M50 junction . The former northbound area is now in use as a maintenance area , though due to the motorway widening this can now only be accessed from the local road network .

Wychavon District Council refused to renew the gambling machine permit for the service area in 1994 , under its policy not to allow gambling machines in areas where food was sold to the public . The Kenning Motor Group , who operated the service area at the time went to the High Court to overturn the decision .

In 1994 the service area was subject to a management buyout , led by Nick Turner , who had been running the site for the previous three years . It was announced the services would trade under the new name , Take a Break . At the time RoadChef unsuccessfully showed interest in purchasing the site , it wasn't until 2001 , by purchasing Take A Break that RoadChef started operating at the Strensham site .

Strensham was one of two test sites chosen by RoadChef for a new loyalty card scheme in 2005 . The cards themselves used new technology to physically display the points total on the card . The loyalty scheme is no longer in use today .

In July 2008 RoadChef started a trial at the southbound site by replacing the Wimpy fast food franchise with a McDonalds outlet , previously only four UK motorway service areas had McDonalds franchises . If this trial was deemed to be successful , RoadChef plan to replace more Wimpy franchises . As part of this trial signs for the southbound area were changed to show the operator name as " McDonalds Costa " , although the RoadChef brand is still used at the services itself . The refurbishment created around 80 jobs in the local area .

Since the Southbound refurbishment , all Wimpy outlets have closed to be replaced by own brand The Burger Company . It is thought that this is just a ' holding ' brand prior to a full @-@ scale refurbishment . Due to the success of the trial Roadchef have refurbished more sites (including Strensham Northbound) to include The Hot Food Company (Restaurant) and McDonald 's .

= = Notable events = =

= = = 2007 Worcestershire Flooding = = =

As a consequence of heavy rainfall in Worcestershire in July 2007 the M5 motorway was blocked , leaving many stranded cars on the road . The operations manager of the service station , Quintin

Speers provided a key role in helping those stranded , opening up areas of the main building to be used by those stuck on the motorway . Quintin Speers also helped drivers by pushing cars to safety and distributing blankets to those in need .

= = Air ambulance = =

The Worcestershire County Air Ambulance , which has been operating since 1991 , moved to the Strensham site in 1998 under a sponsorship deal with Take a Break , who were operating the service area at the time . Access to the air ambulance site can be made from the service station itself or from the local road network via the staff entrance to the services . An open day is held at the site each year to raise money for the operation of the air ambulance . In May 2008 the operational hours of the service was increased from 12 to 14 hours each day , as a result of this , landing lights needed to be installed at the base to enable night time use .

= = Present day = =

The buildings at this site are described in the book Pevsner 's guide to Worcestershire .

= = = Southbound services = = =

The southbound site is in its original location , though none of the original buildings survive . The main building is a large glass @-@ fronted structure with the main car park situated in front of the building , with the lorry and coach parking behind .

In May 2005 it was reported that the southbound services had overnight parking facilities for 60 lorries . This was a chargeable service .

= = = Northbound services = = =

Situated half a mile to the north of the southbound services , the northbound services are set back from the motorway . The main building is an unusual design based on curves and circles . Unlike the southbound site , the cash machines are located outside and both the car and lorry parking is to the front of the building .

Access to an air ambulance base is at the rear of the site . The site also has a budget @-@ chain hotel located within the service area . In May 2005 it was reported that the southbound services had overnight parking facilities for 100 lorries . This was a chargeable service .

= = Facilities = =

The following facilities are available at Strensham :

= = Location = =

Strensham services are located slightly to the north of M5 junction 8 , the exit slip road from the southbound area merges into the slip road from the M5 to junction 8 , so traffic must negotiate junction 8 to rejoin the M5 . Northbound the service area is about a mile north of the junction .

The services are located about 12 miles (19 km) south of Worcester , and about 16 miles (26 km) north of Gloucester . They are also about 100 miles (160 km) to the north west of London .