

# Proton Wira

*Featured model: 1.8SRi*



**T**HE NAME PERSONA MAY HAVE disappeared, but the car lives on as the renamed Wira (which means hero in Malay). But with the new moniker come several Lotus-inspired changes to the chassis, as well as to noise, vibration and harshness control.

This SRi is the leather-trimmed flagship of the hatchback range. It features the twin-cam, 133bhp engine from the Satria GTi (née Compact) which gives the Wira performance that belies its appearance. Lusty torque delivers hearty mid-range urge, with 16-valve eagerness really coming on strong beyond 4000rpm. It's not the most refined four-pot around, but with a terrific appetite for revs, it will spin to the heady 7500 red line with a note that sounds the business. Motorway cruising is unstrained, too, despite lowish overall gearing.

Handling is safe and predictable, but the firm suspension makes a bit of a fuss over poorer surfaces at suburban speeds. The smart alloys ride pretty competently over bumps and potholes, however, especially as the pace quickens.

Pity there's a lot of tyre noise, but avoid wheelspinning take-offs and there's plenty of grip. That said, hard acceleration in the lower gears causes the steering to go light and slightly wandery, while at the best of times there's not a lot of feedback to the steering wheel.

We would prefer better cushioned front seats, but the driver's has height adjustment, as has the steering wheel. Even so, some drivers may find their knees too close to the rim. Several

switches are obscure or hidden by hands on the wheel and the instruments aren't always easy to read. All-round vision is good, though (there are no rear head restraints), except that the rear pillars are wide. The interior boasts a fair tally of equipment, including air conditioning, electric windows (four) and mirrors. There's a decent warranty, as well.

Provided they're on friendly terms, three rear passengers can be accommodated, but neither kneeroom nor legroom is over-generous and headroom is similarly restricted. There are no air vents to the rear floor.

Although on the shallow side and with intruding wheelarches, the boot is quite roomy and easy to load – once the heavy, sluggishly-opening tailgate deigns to rise. The 60/40 split rear backrests fold on to the fixed cushion to give a long, sloping load deck, but there's no safety barrier to protect those up front.

## VERDICT

**The Wira is a model that's now better than its reputation – particularly this potent SRi with its excellent performance. In other aspects, though, it feels dated and uninspiring, and falls short of the high overall standards set by the major players in this market. However, its imperfections are reflected in its keen price, which could be even keener if leather were optional rather than standard.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	★★★★★
<b>Space/practicality</b>	★★☆☆☆
<b>Controls/displays</b>	★★☆☆☆
<b>Safety</b>	★★☆☆☆
<b>Handling/steering</b>	★★★★☆
<b>Comfort</b>	★★☆☆☆
<b>Fuel economy</b>	★★★★☆

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1834cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 133bhp at 6500rpm, 119 lb ft at 5500rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 16 valves

**transmission** 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 19.6 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 16.2 in 4th

**suspension** front: independent coil spring/damper struts, anti-roll bar  
Rear: independent trailing arms with transverse links, coil springs, anti-roll bar  
**steering** hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock; 10.5m diameter turning circle between kerbs (14.9m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with standard anti-skid control (ABS)

**wheels/tyres** 5½in alloy with 185/60R14H tyres (Goodyear Eagle GA on test car); full-size steel spare

## LIKES ...

record of reliability/after-sales care  
illuminated keyhole surround  
numerous intermittent wiper speeds  
washers wash before wipers wipe  
sun visors shaped to fit round mirror  
**and GRIPES**

hard-to-work seat height lever  
rear shelf rattles – needs soft buffers  
no "clean hands" recesses in tailgate  
slim/shallow door pockets impractical  
washer overspray on side windows

## THE WIRA RANGE

**size and type** lower medium (budget-to-mid priced) hatchback and saloon

**trim levels** Li, LXi, Lux, SRi (hatch)

**engines** petrol: 4 cylinder/1.3 litre/74bhp, 4/1.5/86, 4/1.6/94, 4/1.8/114, 4/1.8SRi/133; diesel: 4/2.0/80

**drive** front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; (4-speed stepped automatic available on 1.5LXi, 1.6LXi, 1.8Lux

## OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★★

*Entertainingly swift performer thanks to grunt of Satria GTi's rev-happy engine. Vibrant and growly below 2000rpm, but beyond 4000 revs it lights up and will spin (volubly) to 7500*

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear		
20-40mph	2.8	8.5	11.4		
30-50mph	3.6	7.9	10.8		
40-60mph	4.5	8.0	10.5		
50-70mph	5.6	8.6	11.2		
30-70mph	9.2	16.5	22.0		
max speed in each gear (*using 7000rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	34	51	82	111	121

## SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★☆☆

*Rear passenger space merely adequate, headroom tight. Backrests (split 60/40) only fold on to the fixed cushion, so giving a sloping load area. Cheaply carpeted boot is a fair size, though*

in centimetres (5-door hatch)		inside	(† without sunroof)
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	86-108
length	436	- headroom	93-98†
width - inc mirrors	189	rear - typical leg/	94/
- mirrors folded	169	kneeroom	68
height (no roof bars)	138	- headroom	89
load sill height	14/65	- hiproom	127
(inside/outside)		<b>load space (all seats in use)</b>	
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	355/12.5
turns lock-to-lock	2.8	load length	83-162
turning circle (metres)	10.5	full length to fascia	No
easy to park/garage?		load width	73-135
★★★★		load height (to shelf/	41/
		to top of aperture)	77

## CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★☆☆

*Several switches in glossy "wood" fascia obscured, heater controls "treacly" and those for radio/CD small and fiddly. Dials difficult to read in certain light. Major controls and stalks well placed*



## SAFETY ★★☆☆

*Despite ABS, emergency stops unimpressive. Dual airbags, but no side 'bag option. No rear head restraints, either, and only a lap belt for centre rear passenger. Non-yielding handgrips look spiteful*

braking	dry road stopping distance
pedal feel ★★★★★	from 50 mph (with standard ABS)
in emergency ★★★★★	pedal load   distance
handbrake ★★★★★	10kg   40½m
	18kg   30m best stop
	+4kg ie 22kg   31m ABS on

## EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS

Wira not yet tested

## SECURITY FEATURES

central locking	✓	alarm	0
remote control	×	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	×	luggage security	★★★★
deadlocks	×		
✓ standard	0 factory option	×	not available

## HANDLING AND STEERING ★★☆☆

*Lacks Focus's agility but corners tidily. Over-exuberance means lots of wheelspin in the wet, and hard acceleration in low gears induces a touch of torque-steery vagueness at the wheel*



## COMFORT ★★☆☆

*Ride can feel firm and jiggly on patchy side roads, but improves with speed. Front seats need improved support. Motorway cruising is unstressed despite low top gear; too much tyre noise, though*

## FUEL ECONOMY ★★☆☆

*Not a bad result considering the hard-to-resist acceleration available. Gentle use results in 40-plus mpg. There's a low fuel level warning lamp, but the range between fill-ups is modest*

AA test results (mpg)		official figures (mpg)	
worst (hard/urban)	18	urban	23.8
best (gentle/rural)	41	extra urban	41.8
<b>overall mpg on test</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>combined</b>	<b>32.7</b>
realistic tank capacity	43 litres	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	208g/km
typical range	310 miles	car tax band	D

## HOW THE WIRA 1.8SRi COMPARES

	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes - best stop from * 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/(p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
<b>PROTON WIRA 1.8SRi</b>	<b>4/1834/133</b>	<b>3580</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>22.0/16.5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30/18</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>94/68</b>	<b>2.8/10.5</b>	<b>436</b>
<b>Chrysler Neon 2.0 (auto)</b>	4/1996/131	3100	10.6	Auto	31	29/14	109	97/76	2.8/10.9	439
<b>Citroën Xsara 1.6 16v †</b>	4/1587/110	3220	10(a)	25/17(a)	40	25/23	109	97/72	3.2/10.7	437
<b>Ford Focus 1.8</b>	4/1796/115	3150	9.9	25.6/18.4	35½	23/32	107	100/71	2.9/10.6	415
<b>Renault Megane 1.6 16v</b>	4/1598/110	3280	10.2	23.7/16.6	41½	26/55	107	97/69	3.5/10.65	413
<b>Skoda Octavia 1.6</b>	4/1595/101	3510	11.3	24.8/18.1	35½	24/27	112	99/69	3.1/10.5	451

† estate car performance figures

(a) approximate

\* all with ABS

(p) all power assisted