

Section 7: Infrastructure

Growth in the town's housing stock will require further investment in infrastructure. Development in and around the town (either large-scale new housing developments or an accumulation of smaller ones) should be designed to be sustainable in terms of primary schools, health services, convenience retailing, etc. and the town itself must invest to provide a matching level of town-wide infrastructure to accommodate the increased population; both residential and visitor.

Stratford-upon-Avon suffers from significant congestion both in vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The town has a partial ring road where the A46 carries vehicular traffic around the north-west of the town, but local traffic from the south and east has to pass through the town centre. Developments both in the town and elsewhere in the district are expected to increase the number of vehicles on the town's roads. Further improvements to town centre junctions are needed, and the weight of traffic through the town needs to be addressed, particularly at peak times.

Local, national and international tourism advertisement is bringing increasing numbers of visitors to the town. There is a national imperative to ensure that the visitor experience is excellent as this generates economic benefits and therefore needs investment also.

There are a number of barriers to easy movement around the town for pedestrians and cyclists. For example, the two main pedestrian river crossings are of poor quality and there is no cycle-friendly crossing over the river or suitable crossing for users of wheelchairs or other mobility aids.

The provision of a good quality public transport service is important to a large number of local people and for the provision of tourists. Bus services within the town are generally good, but the lack of a bus station leads to vehicles lying over in the main streets of the town centre. It is also important that there are good inter-changes between different modes of transport – in particular at the town's railway stations.

The town's growing population of older people puts pressure on local health and care services. With increased mobility for the elderly, space needs to be shared across an ever wider mode of mobility.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan supports the role of statutory undertakers in respect of the enhancement of water, gas and electricity provision as the population of Stratford-upon-Avon grows through residential and visitor use.

Furthermore, this plan supports the important role of the emergency services in continuing to provide adequate services to the population and would welcome the establishment of a multi-service centre with good access to the people of the town within the town.

Objective A: Reducing Congestion in the Town

This section of the Plan recognises the scale and importance of the problem of congestion. It inconveniences residents and those visiting the town, damaging not only the local economy but ultimately the reputation of the town. Its causes are multi-faceted without any easily applied single solution.

Traffic comes into the town for a variety of reasons and on a variety of routes and whilst much of it is “though traffic” i.e. not bound for any destination in the town centre or periphery of the town, a good deal of it is. However, there appears to be an acknowledged uncertainty about the volume of through traffic which by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) current estimates could be as low as 10%. This throws doubt on the ring road or relief road as the single solution but not on the good sense of its being comprehensively examined and considered as part of a package of measures.

Over the preceding 15 years the Birmingham Road has seen substantial new developments along its length which has resulted in significant congestion in the town. WCC have attempted to address this problem by focusing on traditional traffic engineering solutions. However, they are increasingly showing signs of not working efficiently as witnessed most recently by the problems over the last months by traffic signals at Western Road. At certain times of the week traffic volumes reach a tipping point when traffic comes to a standstill.

The objective is to introduce a variety of measures to reduce traffic volumes below the level at which tipping points occur and in parallel, to create an environment along the Birmingham Road to improve traffic flows.

What is therefore proposed in this Plan is a combination of measures, some of immediate application and some requiring further examination, but together setting out an overall strategy addressing the congestion problem. It is based on the following objectives:

- 1) Pursue policies to take as much traffic away from the town centre as possible with particular emphasis on HGVs;
- 2) Introduce measures to spread traffic more evenly between access roads into the town and to use all available capacity, thereby relieving pressure on heavily congested access roads;

- 3) Ensure that convenient car parking is provided with easy access from all directions into the town; and
- 4) To make access roads safer and more convenient to pedestrians and cyclists as well as environmentally more sympathetic whilst improving traffic flow by making more efficient use of existing capacity

Policy INF1 – Initiatives to Reduce Peak Time Travel

- 1) A comprehensive report, commissioned by the Highway Authority, on the ways in which through traffic, i.e. traffic not destined for the town centre or anywhere within the whole built up area of the town, can be taken out of town centre routes. The report shall include:
 - A full survey of the destination of traffic coming into the town;
 - An examination of a relief road or ring road with a new bridge or bridges giving an estimate of costs and benefits, including indicative routes or lines of such roads; and
 - An examination of inner distribution road systems to meet the needs of traffic moving within or having destinations within the area of the built up town, including a distribution road via a new canal bridge, linking the Western Road to Maybrook Road in order to alleviate traffic on the Birmingham Road.
- 2) To take measures to reduce peak time traffic and to re-distribute existing traffic from congested roads:
 - The introduction of dynamic traffic directing the use of different roads according to capacity;
 - The improvement of junctions to improve traffic flow;
 - The creation of an access to the Recreation Ground car park from Shipston Road at the entrance to the town and the improvement of pedestrian access into the town by increasing bridge capacity across the river;
 - The adoption of cycling policies.
- 3) Car parking to be provided to support measures for the re-distribution of traffic. For this purpose the following sites should be evaluated;
 - Church Street – additional spaces on the existing car park;
 - Rother Triangle/ Grove Road as outlined in Policy TC10; and

- Rail Station - additional spaces on the existing site.
- 4) The strategic objectives for car parking, both on and off- street, should be the prosperity, vitality and competitiveness of the town's business and shopping whilst taking fully into account:
 - The significance of car parking to the economic and financial well-being of the community;
 - The levels of traffic congestion in and around the town centre;
 - The impact of those levels on the town;
 - The operation of the park and ride schemes; and
 - The views and preferences of the town's residents
 - 5) A Car Parking Advisory Body should be set up to monitor:
 - The use of car parks;
 - The operation of the park and ride;
 - The level and any variation of charges; and
 - Advise on their effectiveness in meeting these strategic objectives.
 - 6) The Advisory body should be based upon the Local Transport Group and include members of the Town Centre Strategic Partnership (see Policy TC1), the local authorities and key commercial interests in the town.
 - 7) Birmingham Road: Immediately prepare a scheme based on consultants' advice for traffic calming in Birmingham Road from the entrance to the town at the A 46 roundabout to the Arden Street/ Clopton Road junction in which:
 - Reduces speed limits to 20mph;
 - Narrows road widths in certain sections;
 - Removes signals in certain locations e.g. St Peters Way and Western Avenue;
 - Removes priority at certain junction and approaches narrowed e.g. St Joseph's Way, the Maybird roundabout and Justins Avenue; and
 - Repositions the Clopton Road junction.

Figure 10 – New Recreation Ground Access Proposals

Explanation

Congestion not only inconveniences residents and visitors but also damages the local economy and the town's reputation. It has different causes and admits no one overall single solution.

The policies proposed here to address the problem are founded on two firm principles: to take traffic that is not bound for the town out of the town and to distribute other traffic away from the access routes that become congested at certain times of the day.

The amount of "through traffic" i.e. not bound for any destination in the town centre or the town's periphery, is uncertain but could be as low as 10% according to the County Council based on evidence of xxx. This uncertainty throws doubt on the sense of adopting a ring road or relief road solution as an immediate single solution but not on the suitability of researching it to obtain up to date reliable evidence and looking at it as part of a package of measures.

Some of the policies advanced here are capable of immediate application whilst others require some further examination but together they set out an overall strategy to address congestion and improve the ambience of the key approaches to the town.

It is in this last respect that the Birmingham Road deserves particular attention. Over the last 20 years there has been a growing number of steadily growing uses around this road, all demanding access to it; they have included residential, major retail space, showrooms and light industry. It has increasingly become clear that these uses cannot be accommodated whilst at the same time attempting to maintain the Birmingham Road as a primary, vehicle dominated way into the town. Moreover, it has also become clear that the traditional road traffic engineering solutions that have been consistently applied are failing as witnessed most recently by the immediate problems caused by the introduction of traffic signals at the Western Avenue junction earlier this year.

A different approach to Birmingham Road is needed in which the use of the road by access traffic is shared with local traffic and with pedestrians and cyclists using the road as an immediate local facility. This approach was fore-shadowed in a report to the

County Council in March 2013 and was supported by the report's authors JMP Associates; it was not pursued by the County Council because of a suggested lack of evidence of the policy's success elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is proposed in this Plan because it seeks to harmonise all road user needs and, if introduced as part of an overall strategy for re-distribution of traffic as advocated in this Plan, is likely to reduce volume and congestion. Evidence we have gained from other towns e.g. in Newport, Ashford and Kensington High Street shows improvements to traffic flows and safety. The intention here would be to create an attractive sub-urban boulevard type gateway which would have the added attraction of making fully feasible the policy for special Environmental Improvement Area for the Birmingham Road as set out in Policy TC11.

Policy INF2 - Promoting and Enhancing Park and Ride Opportunities

Use of the northern and southern Park and Ride facilities serving the town will continue to be encouraged and supported. Clear signage to the Park and Rides should be introduced on major trunk routes such as the A46, leading to Stratford-upon-Avon.

Explanation

There is strong support for the principle of park and ride and it has great potential for reducing car entry into the town, but there are problems over funding and viability. This Plan proposes that a review be carried out into the operation of the northern and southern park and ride sites together with a comparison of successful park and ride schemes in other towns.

The review should examine the following matters:

- The most effective operating hours;
- Bus frequency and routes;
- The most appropriate charges and charging structures (parking charge v. bus fare);
- The relative cost of in-town parking;
- The type and location of signage; and
- Publicity materials

Any recommendations of the review will be supported by this policy.

Objective B: Improving Pedestrian and Cycle Connectivity

There are a number of barriers to easy movement around the town for pedestrians and cyclists. For example, the two main pedestrian river crossings are of poor quality and there is no cycle-friendly crossing of the river or suitable crossing for users of wheelchairs or other mobility aids.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan seeks to remove these barriers and create a safer and more accessible Neighbourhood Area for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy INF3 – Dedicated Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

A network of new and improved pedestrian and cycle paths will be created within the Neighbourhood Area.

All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how pedestrian and cycle links have been incorporated throughout the development and how the development connects to the existing infrastructure.

Priority will be given to the improvement of pedestrian and cycle routes connecting the following receptors:

- Town centre and Maybird Centre in accordance with Policy TC17;
- In and around Bridgeway;
- Town and parkway railway stations;
- Schools and Stratford College; and
- Proposed new bus station

Figure 11 – Dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes

Explanation

Stratford already has extensive networks of cycle and pedestrian routes but they are somewhat disconnected. It is important that all new developments ensure they are connected to these networks to make it easy for cyclists and walkers to move about the town.

A number of improvements are also needed to existing cycle and pedestrian routes. Some existing footpaths are narrow and poorly maintained, and funding should be sought to widen and resurface these where practicable in to make them more attractive to use.

There is also a need for improved links between the town centre and the Maybird Centre, better arrangements for pedestrian access to the town centre from Bridgeway car parks, and cycle links to the town centre from both the existing town centre railway station and the new Stratford Parkway railway station. Two key gateways to the town are the railway station and the leisure centre coach park, both involving busy road crossings for large groups of people. More welcoming and safer means of access should be investigated.

Further work is needed over the coming plan period to ensure that a network to cycle paths is established ensuring safety and, where traffic flows are heavy, separation between motor vehicles and cyclists/pedestrians.

All new development will be expected to demonstrate how increased cyclist and pedestrian flows can be accommodated and connected into the existing network. Any new pedestrian and cycle infrastructure will be expected to address the needs of the disabled and mobility scooter users.

The existing Clopton Bridge no longer adequately meets the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The Tramway Bridge is frequently overloaded in terms of flow and safety. Further capacity is therefore needed which is likely to be a new bridge at a location where pedestrian flows are established. Any new bridge must not interfere with the iconic and internationally famous view from the Tramway Bridge downstream towards Holy Trinity Church.

The canal quarter development will provide an opportunity to incorporate new crossings using the redundant railway bridge.

Policy INF4 – Replacement Bridge at Lucy's Mill

Proposals for a replacement bridge at Lucy's Mill will be supported. The design of the replacement bridge shall take into account the need to provide access for those with mobility impairments, people with prams and pushchairs, and cyclists.

The design of the new bridge will be subject to a design competition and full public consultation including key stakeholders.

Explanation

The current bridge at Lucy's Mill requires users to ascend and descend narrow flights of steps which exclude a percentage of users including those with wheelchairs. Cyclists and people with pushchairs have to carry their bikes or pushchairs up and down the steps. A new bridge meeting the needs of all users would not only make riverside walks more user friendly, but it would also provide a valuable crossing for the increasing number of people living on the south side of the town.

Objective C: Improving Public Transport Opportunities

The provision of good public transport services is important to local people and for the provision of tourist visitors. Bus services within the town are generally good, but the lack of a bus station leads to vehicles lying over in the main streets of the town centre. It is also important that there are good inter-changes between different modes of transport in particular at the town's railway stations.

The long term rail development opportunity must be safeguarded as a part of the plan period strategy; particularly in light of significant new town developments in Lighthorne Heath, Long Marston and Wellsbourne.

Policy INF5 – Preserving and Enhancing Rail Links and Services

The existing town centre railway station will be retained and enhanced. Links with other modes of transport should be improved. Whilst having regard to the environmental implications, the expansion of rail services to new destinations will be encouraged.

Explanation

The town's central railway station is an important terminus station for commuters, visitors and townsfolk. The opening of the parkway station should not result in the demise of the central station.

The development of the Cattle Market site will enable better links to be made between rail and bus services. Recent enhancements to the town centre station provide an opportunity to develop a central transport hub location including lay over for bus and coaches with significant car parking.

Warwickshire County Council has plans to develop the Nuneaton-Coventry – Kenilworth – Leamington rail corridor, and this Neighbourhood Development Plan supports moves to extend those services to Stratford-upon-Avon, offering the future possibility of a rail link to Birmingham Airport once HS2 creates more capacity on the Coventry-Birmingham line.

This Plan also requires the protection of the former railway route to Honeybourne from any development which would compromise its reopening. Longer term, substantial expansion at Long Marston is likely and this line could provide an alternative to car travel to and from the south and west for visitors and, with a station at Long Marston, growing village populations.

The County Council commissioned Ove Arup to examine this development and recommended serious consideration subject to the business economics being confirmed.

Policy INF6 – Promoting Enhanced Bus and Coach Facilities

Proposals for an enhanced coach and bus terminus will be delivered in the following ways:

- 1) Provision of a bus-rail interchange at the railway station;
- 2) Limiting the town centre streets for pick up and drop off only and for service buses;
- 3) Promotion of an extended and improved terminus at the leisure centre;
- 4) Encouraging operators to use the leisure centre terminus for layovers;
- 5) Discouraging coach and bus layovers within the town centre, specifically Bridge Street and Wood Street;
- 6) Hybrid & Start/Stop bus operations should be encouraged; and
- 7) Agreement will be sought on acceptable routes for coaches and HGV's in the town.

Explanation

For many years there have been repeated calls for a new purpose built bus station for Stratford-upon-Avon. The prospects were covered by a consultants' report in 2011 which identified possible sites but no obvious source of funding was identified at that time. That report merits further study and consideration should to other off-street options for layovers such as land adjacent to the railway station.

Objective D: Improving Access to Learning Opportunities

House building in Stratford-upon-Avon has not been matched by the provision of school places near to the developments. The south of the river has long been without adequate local provision necessitating cross town travel. New proposals for further developments south of the river raise the need to protect a site for potential education developments.

With more housing development planned, it is important that school provision keeps pace with the changes in population.

Policy INF7 – Protecting and Enhancing Education Facilities

The opportunity to access education is imperative to sustaining a strong and prosperous community and economy.

Existing educational institutions will be encouraged to respond to the changing needs of the community and adapt and expand where necessary.

Proposals for enhancing existing institutions will be supported providing they do not have adverse effects on surrounding land uses and do represent high quality design and build standards.

Explanation

It is important to ensure that adequate land and funding is available for the expansion of schools to meet current and future demand for school places. Such expansion will be supported in principle providing that there is no conflict with other policies in this plan.

To prevent social isolation in school-children, we must ensure that future housing developments do not negatively impact on our children's ability to go to their local school or nursery.

New housing developments will be expected to contribute financially towards mitigating their impact on primary, secondary and nursery school places so as to ensure that current school children are not disadvantaged by development and children entering the education system through new development have access to the same opportunities.

It is important that all educational buildings are fit for purpose, fully accessible and built to a modern standard. The renewal of existing building stock to replace temporary classrooms and remove dangerous materials such as asbestos will be encouraged.

New and replacement educational buildings should set an example and adopt above minimum standards in build quality and energy efficiency.

Measures to reduce air pollution around schools; promote walking, cycling and bus transport will be actively encouraged.

Policy INF8 – Provision of new Educational Facilities

Sustaining and increasing the opportunity to access education should be delivered through the provision of new educational institutions either to meet a recognised need or to complement and expand on the success of existing institutions.

A new secondary educational facility will be supported south of the river in order to meet localised demands and assist in reducing cross town trips.

The development of a new school catering for Special Education Needs will be supported south of the river, in order to address the capacity limitations of the Welcombe Hills School.

In particular proposals which promote the link between education and heritage and tourism will be encouraged.

Explanation

This Plan supports the provision of new schools in suitable locations. Given the reduction in the county council role in education local communities need to drive this issue. Initially, land adjacent to the new retail developments to the south west of Trinity Mead would be ideal for such developments and would offer the opportunity to provide good road, cycle and pedestrian access. This would take pressure away from the current schools north of the river.

Educational facilities in Stratford-upon-Avon include Stratford High School, Stratford-upon-Avon College of Further Education, two Grammar Schools and the Welcombe Hills School catering for Special Education Needs, in addition to the primary schools and nursery school provision across the Neighbourhood Area.

The development of a new secondary school to the south of the town to address the imbalance of education provision across the town will be actively encouraged.

The development of a new school catering for Special Education Needs to the south of the town, will be actively encouraged. This is urgently required to address the limited capacity of the Welcombe Hills School which has already been exceeded and currently planned to be catered for by a temporary facility in the town.

For the purposes of policies I8 and I9, libraries and learning centres are included in the definition of educational facilities.