

## Council

15 May 2018

### Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy

#### Recommendation

That, subject to Cabinet's approval at its meeting on 10 May, Council endorses the Stratford upon Avon Area Transport Strategy as an addendum to the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-26.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council made a commitment to produce a Stratford-upon-Avon area transport strategy at the third Stratford Traffic Summit (March 2015). The new strategy will supplement the existing and partially outdated Southern and Western Warwickshire Area Strategy, which is contained within the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-26 (LTP). With traffic congestion increasing and pressure on the transport network growing, including from the housing and employment allocations within the adopted Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy, there is a need to revisit the existing transport strategy.
- 1.2 The Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy has been produced jointly with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. It sets out the general principles that need to underlie the development of the Town's transport infrastructure over the next 15 to 20 years. The adopted strategy is not a modification of the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-26, but will operate as supplementary guidance.
- 1.3 The draft strategy was informed by stakeholder and community engagement which included:
  - Three well attended Stratford Traffic Summits held during 2014 and 2015.
  - A series of meetings held in 2015 with Stratford based organisations and interest groups including the RSC, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford Town Council, Stratford Vision and the Town Transport Group.

The draft strategy also took account of draft versions of the Stratford-upon-Avon Neighbourhood Plan and the Strategic Transport Assessments carried out by the County Council to assist the development of the Core Strategy.

- 1.4 At its meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Cabinet endorsed the proposals contained within the initial draft Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy and agreed to then consult with the public and stakeholders on the draft strategy.
- 1.5 The consultation took place between 9<sup>th</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017. A Consultation Evaluation Report and revised draft strategy were published in December 2017.
- 1.6 The revised strategy was considered by Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> April. The Council resolved that the strategy be endorsed, subject to the deletion of measures that propose an Eastern Relief Road (ERR) and subject to further work being carried out into ways in which dependence on the motor car can be reduced. In response to this resolution, the strategy has been further revised and the measures that proposed an ERR have been removed from the strategy. The revised draft strategy is provided in Appendix A.

## **2.0 The consultation**

- 1.1 The consultation on the draft strategy took place over a six week period between 9<sup>th</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017. It was launched at the 4<sup>th</sup> Stratford-upon-Avon Traffic Summit which was attended by approximately 250 people. Prior to the launch, the draft strategy was discussed at a joint meeting with District and County members. The draft strategy was also presented to Stratford organisations and interest groups during a round of meetings held before and during the consultation period. A further well attended public meeting organised by Tiddington Village Residents' Association took place on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and focused on the possibility of an Eastern Relief Road. The consultation was widely publicised in the local media and stakeholders were invited to respond to the proposed strategy.
- 1.2 The primary means of response was via an online survey held on the Ask Warwickshire website, but responses were welcomed in any written format. The survey asked for an indication of the level of support for the strategy objectives and for each of the six proposed themes, each of which contained a number of supporting measures. The survey also provided an opportunity for respondents to comment on the proposals.
- 1.3 In total 910 responses were received made up of:
  - 651 responses to the online survey
  - 26 via paper versions of the survey
  - 170 responses on a pro-forma response sheet
  - 15 responses on a second pro-forma response sheet
  - 48 other responses received via email and letter.
- 2.4 The consultation feedback was independently analysed by market research consultants and further evaluated by officers. A Consultation Evaluation Report (included in Appendix B of this report – available on the website, and in Group rooms) was published in December 2017. The report detailed and

responded to the feedback received and set out the revisions that were subsequently made to the strategy. A revised strategy was published alongside the Consultation Evaluation Report.

### 3.0 Key messages from the consultation

3.1 The table below shows the level of support and opposition to the strategy objectives and six themes proposed within the strategy. There was more support than opposition for the strategy objectives and for themes 2, 3, 4 and 5. Themes 1 and 6 received a higher level of objection than support. Analysis of the consultation feedback shows this opposition was primarily a response to the measures proposing the South Western Relief Road and the Eastern Relief Road. The remaining measures within these themes generated relatively few comments.

Item	Support (%)	Object (%)
Strategy objectives	55	45
Theme 1: Manage traffic and travel in and through Stratford-upon-Avon	23	77
Theme 2: Strategic road, rail and air links	76	24
Theme 3: Public transport provision within Stratford-upon-Avon and across South Warwickshire and neighbouring authorities	85	15
Theme 4: Encourage walking and cycling	88	12
Theme 5: Managing the impact of coaches long distance buses	86	14
Theme 6: Managing the impact of HGVs	34	66

Figures for respondents who responded neutrally, i.e. neither supported nor objected to the proposals, have been excluded from the figures presented above, but are available in the Consultation Evaluation Report (Appendix B – available on the website and in group rooms).

### 3.2 The South Western Relief Road

3.3 The inclusion of the South Western Relief Road (SWRR) in the strategy generated a significant volume of comments, the vast majority of which opposed the road. The comments objecting to the SWRR made up 12% (52) of comments to theme 1. The reasons for objecting to the SWRR varied, but included:

- The proposed alignment / route.
- The impact on the local community and environment.
- There is no requirement for the road.

3.4 The SWRR will provide a new route between the A3400 Shipston Road and the B349 Evesham Road where it will connect with the West of Shottery Relief Road to provide a link to the A46 at Wildmoor.

3.5 The SWRR was identified in the Strategic Transport Assessments (STAs) that were carried out to provide the evidence base for the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy as being essential to enable the full development of the

allocated housing site at Long Marston Airfield. The STAs also identified that the road would help alleviate wider congestion issues in Stratford-upon-Avon. The SWRR is safeguarded in the adopted Core Strategy but is still subject to detailed design and approval. Its inclusion aligns the Transport Strategy with the Core Strategy. The SWRR has therefore been retained in the revised strategy.

### 3.6 The Eastern Relief Road

3.7 The Eastern Relief Road (ERR) was the most contentious measure canvassed in the draft strategy and it elicited the highest volume of comments. Approximately 35% of comments made in response to theme 1 specifically objected to the ERR. The reasons given for objecting to the ERR included that:

- There is no requirement for an ERR.
- Insufficient detail and supporting evidence had been provided.
- The impact of building the road would be too great, particularly if it resulted in further house building.

These points have also formed the basis of further representations received following the publication of the revised Strategy and Consultation Evaluation Report in December 2017. The representations requested that reference to the ERR be removed from the Strategy. Representations were received from Alveston Villagers' Association, Communities Against Urban Sprawl and Exploitation, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Transport Group and Tiddington Village Residents' Association (these are provided in Appendix C) as well as from a number of local residents which cover similar points to those raised by the organisations.

3.8 The draft strategy identifies that a relief road on the eastern side of the town would provide an alternative route to the M40 and reduce traffic in the town centre. An ERR is not required to support the growth identified in the adopted Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy, but was included in both the consultation draft and the revised draft strategy (December 2017) on the basis that it would improve overall traffic conditions in the town and support the delivery of the following strategy objectives:

- Objective 2; Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in Stratford Town Centre.
- Objective 3; Reduce the negative impact of traffic on air pollution.
- Objective 4; Protect and enhance the historic core of the town centre and wider area and support the visitor economy.

3.9 Traffic modelling has shown that an ERR which connects the A422 Banbury Road with the A439 Warwick Road and is delivered in addition to a full western relief road and other transport mitigation identified through the Core Strategy process would further reduce congestion in Stratford-upon-Avon. The modelling also suggests that an ERR could facilitate further pedestrian priority and other environmental improvement schemes in the town centre as well as HGV restrictions on Clopton Bridge. The traffic modelling has been summarised in the Strategy with further explanation provided in the Consultation Evaluation Report.

- 3.10 Only high level assessment and analysis of an ERR had been carried out and while it was considered that this provided sufficient evidence to justify its position in the strategy, it was included on the basis that further detailed assessment of the benefits, impacts, costs, funding options and overall deliverability of such a scheme would be required before a decision could be made on whether an ERR should be promoted and implemented.
- 3.11 A primary objection to the ERR raised within the strategy consultation and the recent representations was that it would enable significant additional housing development to that identified in the Core Strategy to come forward in southeast Stratford-upon-Avon. Furthermore, it was suggested that a large housing allocation may be required to fund the road and that house building on such a scale would generate additional traffic that would take up any road capacity and exacerbate existing traffic problems.
- 3.12 The Stratford-upon-Avon District Core Strategy sets the local planning policy for development allocation until 2031 and does not make provision that could progress an ERR. Unless that were to change following a review of the Core Strategy, the ERR would have to be assessed on its merits as a scheme that is not linked to significant new development. Strategic level traffic modelling suggests that in the event that housing development were to be considered in southeast Stratford in the future, an ERR would both mitigate the strategic impact of the development and also improve the overall traffic conditions within central areas of the town.
- 3.13 **Stratford-upon-Avon to Honeybourne railway line**
- 3.14 Theme 2 of the strategy; ‘Strategic road, rail and air links’ received a relatively high level of support in the consultation with 76% of respondents expressing support for the proposed measures. However, within the responses to the survey, 66 people stated that the Stratford to Honeybourne railway line should be reinstated or further feasibility work carried out to establish the viability of the line and that this should be reflected in the strategy. In addition, 170 copies of a proforma calling for the reinstatement of the railway line were received. Some opposition to reopening the line was also logged but these comments were few in comparison to those in favour of the line.
- 3.15 The draft strategy did not make specific reference to the Stratford to Honeybourne railway line, but did include a broad commitment to improve the strategic rail offer of the town to destinations such as London and the Thames Valley. It did not detail how this would be brought forward, but instead provided a wide policy area within which the councils could operate.
- 3.16 In response to the volume of comments received on the issue a joint District and County Council position statement on the Stratford to Honeybourne railway line has been incorporated into the revised strategy.

## 4.0 Revisions to the strategy following the consultation

4.1 This section provides a summary of the changes made to the draft transport strategy published in December 2017 following the consultation.

### 4.2 Objectives

- The proposed objective; 'Protect the historic core of Stratford Town and support the visitor economy' has been broadened to reflect the opportunity presented by the transport strategy to not just protect the historic core, but to also enhance this area and the wider town.
- Two objectives have been added to reflect the health benefits that can be derived from an improved and more sustainable transport system, and to promote social inclusion via the transport network.

### 4.3 Theme 1: Manage traffic and travel in and through Stratford-upon-Avon.

- Additional explanation of the evidence base for including measures that propose the SWRR and an ERR in the strategy has been provided.
- The commentary on the ERR has been revised to state that funding options will be explored as part of any future work to analyse and assess the value and impact of a road.
- The current status of the A3400 Birmingham Road Improvement Scheme as fully funded with delivery planned for 2019/20 has been reflected in the strategy.
- Measure 8 that proposed focusing '...parking at out of town centre locations.....' will be revised to state that it is long-stay parking that will be focused at out of town centre locations. The strategy will also specify that short-stay parking will be retained within the town centre and that consideration will need to be given to how parking operates during evenings in order to support the evening economy.

### 4.4 Theme 2: Strategic road, rail and air links.

- The need to eliminate on carriageway peak time queuing at Junction 14 of the M40 has been recognised in the revised strategy.
- A position statement on the Stratford to Honeybourne railway line has been added to the strategy.
- The revised strategy makes greater reference to enhancing integration between transport modes.

### 4.5 Theme 3: Public Transport provision within Stratford-upon-Avon and across South Warwickshire and neighbouring authorities.

- The revised strategy recognises that off-peak inter-urban public transport service improvements are required to support employers in the tourism and leisure sector.
- A measure that proposes a town centre bus station has been added to the revised strategy, along with commentary of the significant challenges that would need to be overcome in order to deliver this.

- A measure has been added to the strategy to support the introduction of technological advancements that make public transport more convenient.
- 4.6 Theme 4: Encouraging walking and cycling.
- The Stratford-upon-Avon Cycle Network Plan has been referenced.
  - The revised strategy highlights the importance of maintaining cycling infrastructure to a high standard.
- 4.7 Theme 5: Managing the impact of coaches and long distance buses.
- A proposal for a coach pick up / drop off facility closer to the town centre has been added to the strategy.
  - Reference has been made to ensuring equality of access in the relevant sections of the strategy.
- 4.8 Theme 6: Managing the impact of HGVs.
- Measure 3 that proposed; 'Impose weight restrictions to limit goods vehicles access to the town centre' has been revised to reflect the existing town centre weight restriction and to propose that future work will focus on reviewing loading restrictions.

## 5.0 Further revisions to the strategy

- 5.1 This section summarises the changes that have been made to the transport strategy following publication of the revised draft strategy in December 2017 and specifically in response to the resolution made at the Stratford District Council Full Council meeting that took place on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The District Council resolved that the strategy be endorsed subject to the deletion of measures that propose an Eastern Relief Road (ERR) and subject to further work being carried out into ways in which dependence on the motor car can be reduced.
- 5.2 Theme 1: Manage traffic and travel in and through Stratford-upon-Avon.
- **Having paid due regard to the resolution passed by Stratford District Council on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 the measure that proposed 'A further relief road around the eastern side of the town to provide an alternative route to the M40 and reduce traffic in the town centre' has been deleted.**
  - The measure that proposed 'Impose restrictions on vehicular access to Clopton Bridge (requires delivery of an eastern relief road)' has been deleted. It is considered unlikely that this measure can be delivered without an Eastern Relief Road, but this is discussed further in theme 6 of the strategy and in paragraph 5.3 below.
- 5.3 Theme 6: Managing the impact of HGVs.
- Additional commentary has been provided to explain that it is unlikely the construction of the West of Shottery Relief Road and South Western Relief Road will enable a weight limit to be imposed on Clopton Bridge. This is because the majority of HGVs displaced by a weight restriction

would reroute via the shortest alternative route to minimise journey length and fuel costs. This would be either via Seven Meadows Road and Birmingham Road or via the B4086 to Wellesbourne. Both of these routes have existing capacity issues and neither are suitable for large volumes of HGVs.

- Measure 1 has been amended to remove the reference to the ERR within the proposal to provide relief roads to reduce the level of HGV through traffic accessing central areas.
- Measure 2 has been amended to state that options for imposing restrictions on HGV access over Clopton Bridge will be considered. The previous version of the strategy stated that restrictions would be imposed on HGV access over Clopton Bridge, but that this was reliant on delivery of an ERR.

5.4 No changes have been made to the strategy in response to the request for further work on ways in which dependence on the motor car can be managed. The draft strategy specifically commits to this outcome in Objective 1, 'Reduce high car dependency particularly for travel to work and school' and reducing car dependency is a consistent theme throughout the entire strategy and within many of the strategy measures. Further work will be carried out to develop the detail around these measures as part of work to implement the strategy.

## **6.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

6.1 This report is being considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 May. Subject to Cabinet approval, the Council is asked to endorse the Strategy. Although Council approval is not required for a modification to the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-26, its endorsement is sought as the Strategy will be supplementary guidance to the Plan.

## **Appendices**

- A. Revised Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy
- B. Consultation Evaluation Report – available on the website and in group rooms
- C. Representations from stakeholder groups received following publication of the revised draft Transport Strategy. – available on the website and in group rooms.

## **Background papers**

None



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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication of the report for Cabinet:

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Communities Overview and Scrutiny Chair and Group Spokespersons:  
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Local Members: Kate Rolfe and Keith Lloyd