

## **Stratford Transport Strategy**

### **The work of the Reference Group**

The Stratford Transport Strategy Reference Group was established in December 2006 to help Warwickshire County Council progress its Stratford Transport Strategy (STS) Review. The Review was necessitated following on from the unsuccessful Major Scheme Bid in 2003 and the subsequent development of the Urban Design Framework for delivering a “World Class Stratford”.

Members of the group represent a broad cross-section of views on local transport issues. To ensure there is overlap between the STS Review and the wider policy context, several members are also involved in World Class Stratford (WCS).

The Reference Group provides an opportunity to inform the STS Review process but is not a steering group or decision-making body. It has been conceived to act as an informal ‘sounding-board’ for WCC during the STS Review in the development of ideas and proposals, and it provides information and advice on key transport and other relevant issues in Stratford for consideration by WCC.

Meetings to date have considered issues related to:

- Walkable Core project for the UDF;
- The number and onward routing of HGVs using Clopton Bridge;
- Measures to control the timing of access by delivery vehicles;
- Mechanisms to encourage tourist coaches to park at Riverside rather than driving through town without stopping.

Most notably, a presentation by Dr Bearman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, introduced the concept that the majority of Stratford’s Grade 1 and Grade 2\* buildings lie on a spine route from Henley Street to Old Town and that they cannot be appreciated due to the presence of traffic, parked vehicles and congested footways. The Reference Group enthusiastically embraced the idea of this spine forming the heart of the Walkable Core, with the addition of Bridge Street, Sheep Street and Chapel Street.

The Walkable Core project is being taken forward by WCC now and the Reference Group is fully involved in developing the concept through to a scheme which can be submitted for funding.

The Reference Group also recently considered the outcome of an HGV tracking survey which demonstrated that 4.3% of the 21,000 total vehicles using Clopton Bridge every day were HGVs. The origins and destinations of these HGVs were tracked and it was not surprising to find that 27% came or went to the Long Marston site. It was clear to the Group that until the future use of the site is determined, and given the fact that there are only two places to cross the river to the south of Stratford, then there is little that currently can be done to reduce the level of HGV traffic here.

As mentioned earlier, the Reference Group will now have a very particular role to play in the development of the Walkable Core project, and will continue to act as a sounding board for the County Council in its consideration of traffic management issues in Stratford.

Chairman, Ian Heggie’s, comments in relation to the Walkable Core:

- (i) It will be difficult to “close” the spine to traffic – at least initially – so the strategy is to significantly reduce it to (hopefully) make shared use of the roadway possible.
- (ii) The key to reducing traffic involves:

- encouraging commuters to use P&R (this requires business permits, higher season ticket prices, later opening times, e.g., to 9.00 pm, and a second/third P&R site);
  - encourage long stay visitors – including those staying overnight – to use P&R (this requires that people can park overnight and that a combined parking charge/bus fare be introduced to avoid discriminating against families);
  - publicise P&R to potential long stay visitors more effectively via the SDC/WCC web pages;
  - reduce the amount of cross-town traffic by placing car parks more strategically around the town (e.g., residents in Old Town have to drive through the town to find off-street parking);
  - make clear to the public that the above strategies are designed to free up the remaining town centre parking spaces for short stay residents and visitors;
  - convert most parking in the town centre into short-stay parking (5-6 hrs max) and encourage people from Trinity Mead to park & walk from SS car parking on the Recreation Ground (maybe the proposed foot bridge does have a role!!);
  - in phases, reduce on-street parking along the spine route;
  - designate a suitable coach park (with washing facilities and cheap food/drink) with associated drop off/pick up points to remove out-of-town through coaches from the town (a communication system is also required between the parking area and the pick-up points);
  - introduce restrictions on delivery vehicles to ensure that they do not interfere with pedestrians during the middle of the day (e.g., have no pick-ups/deliveries between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm);
  - press for the Western Relief Road to be financed without developer contributions – hopefully this might be combined with a weight restriction on Clopton Bridge.
- (iii) It is important to ensure that removal of traffic and upgrading of the road/pavement surface is done at the same time. Otherwise, you simply have empty streets and it looks awful and attracts adverse comments (an important lesson learned in Oxford).
- (iv) The Reference Group does not believe we can make further progress on the Walkable Core until SDC publishes their new parking strategy AND the strategy faces up to all the challenges mentioned above (i.e., higher season ticket costs, business permits for bona fide businesses, conversion of long-stay to short-stay in the town centre, better designed tariff structure, more promotion of P&R, reduction of on-street parking spaces, etc.).

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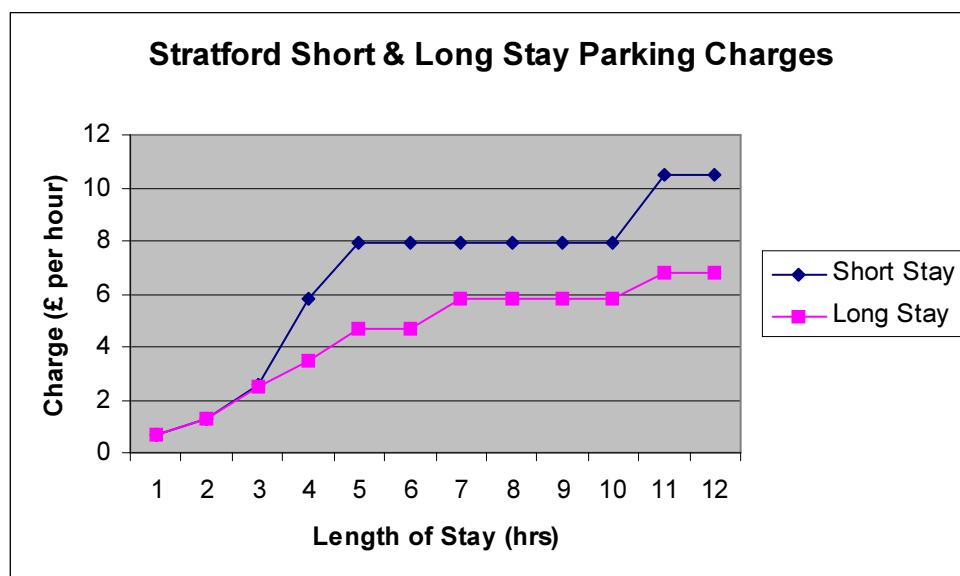
Ian Heggie  
 Chair  
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## What's Wrong With Parking in Stratford?

The following note addresses four important parking issues: (i) the implicit parking subsidy that Stratford-upon-Avon is providing to the rest of Stratford District; (ii) the structure of the Short Stay parking tariff in the town; (iii) how the short stay tariff compares with those in competitor towns; and (iv) the price of season tickets in the town.

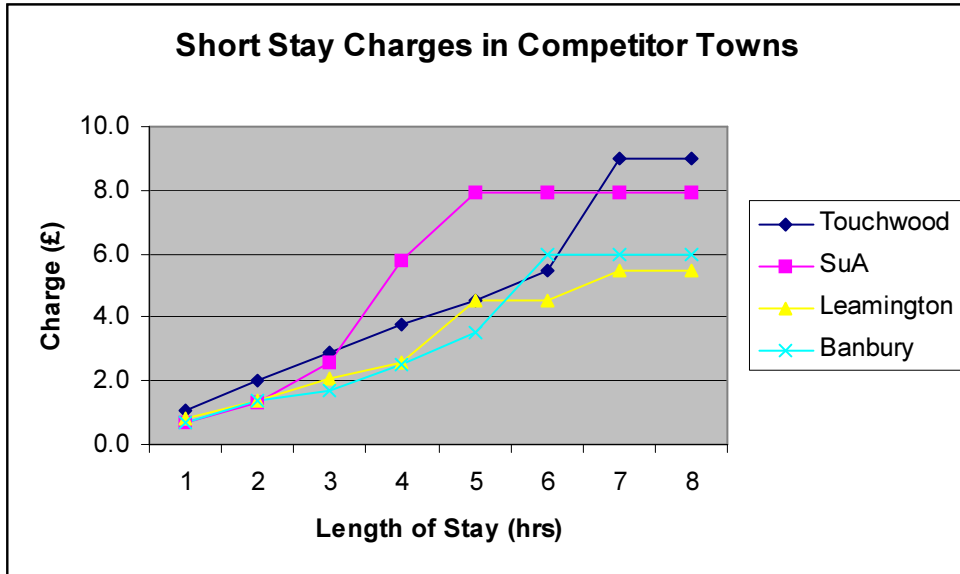
**Parking Subsidies.** A recent paper prepared by the District Council (Draft Parking Strategy, Version 5, Appendix 1) shows that there are 10 SDC car parks in Stratford, all charging high prices. In the rest of the District there are 12 SDC car parks, only one of which has any charges. The rest are free. It is therefore no surprise that the Council makes an annual profit of nearly £900,000 from Stratford's car parks and loses nearly £200,000 on car parks in the rest of the District. Stratford is effectively subsidising free off-street parking throughout the rest of the District. If the Council charged £0.50 per hour in these "free" car parks – still cheap compared to the £0.70 charged in Stratford car parks – it would cover these costs, make a small surplus and enable the Council to return the £200,000 subsidy it has taken from Stratford. On the other hand, if a charge is introduced but the first 3 hours are provided free (as recommended in the SDC Executive paper), the charges would generate very little revenue, since only an estimated 15 % of short stay car park users stay more than 3 hours.

**Short Stay Tariff.** The short stay tariff is one of the most distorted charging regimes in the country. This is not brought out in the SDC Draft Parking Strategy which only looks at the charge levied for the first hour. Not only is the short stay tariff inconsistent with the long stay tariff, it jumps



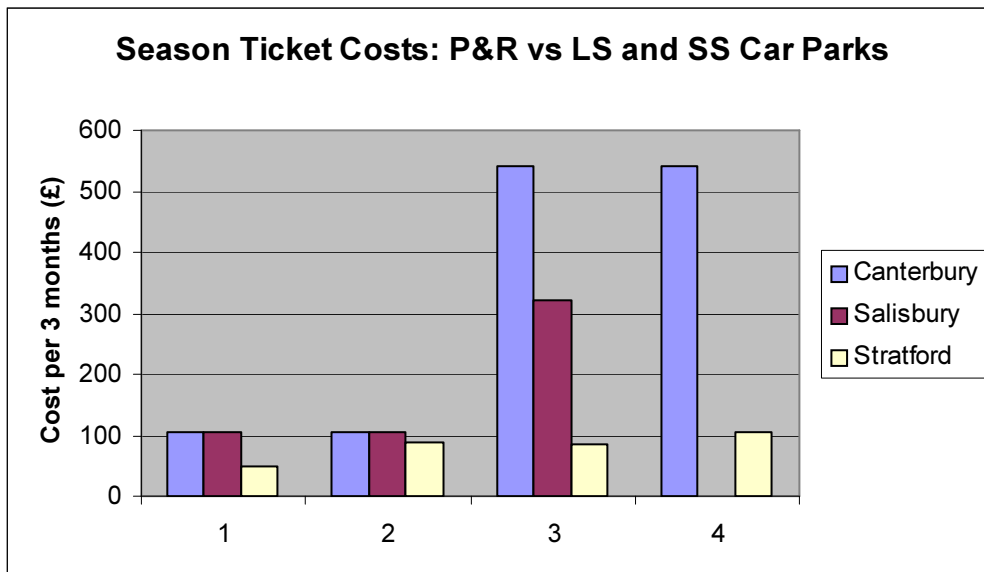
erratically from £2.60 for 3 hours, through £5.80 for 4 hours to £7.90 for 5 hours. No wonder less than 7% of short stay users stay in the town for more than 4 hours. Furthermore, as a recent visitor survey noted, "A visit lasting over 4 hours ... is significant in terms of visitor spending .... The longer the visitors stay, the more likely the trip will involve some [serious] spend." The badly designed short stay parking tariff is driving serious visitors away from the town.

**Short Stay Charges in Competitor Towns.** How does our town compare with its competitors? Not well. We are far higher than the commercial car parks at Banbury and Touchwood Shopping Centres and the Council car parks in Leamington.



This is particularly true of the “magic” 4-hour time band. If we are to compete effectively with our nearest competitors, we need to urgently re-structure the short term parking tariff. Indeed, the best course of action would be to adopt the Touchwood tariff -- it encourages people to stay no more than 6 hours and then delivers a sharp message to them to clear off. Exactly what any business subject to market discipline would do.

**Season Tickets.** Season ticket charges in the Stratford Park & Ride are lower than in Canterbury and Salisbury. On the other hand, the cost of season tickets for town



Note: 1 = P&R without constraint; 2 = P&R with one late night per week; 3 = Season ticket in LS car park; 4 = Season ticket in SS car park (not allowed in Canterbury).

centre car parks are a fraction of what they are in Canterbury and Salisbury. Stratford clearly provides motorists with little incentive to use Park & Ride. To encourage more use of P&R, season ticket costs in Stratford need to be sharply increased. However, the sharp increase does not need to penalise *bona fide* businesses that need to use their car during the day. Firms that can show an operational business need – like the system used in Oxford -- should qualify for moderately priced business parking permits. However, a sharp increase in season ticket costs will probably have to wait until a second P&R site is operational.

Ian G Heggie  
Revised 5 July 2008.

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