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# Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy

Draft

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## Introduction

This document sets out Warwickshire County Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council's shared transport strategy for Stratford-upon-Avon and the town's immediate environs and key strategic links. It identifies general principles that need to underlie future development of the town's transport network so that Stratford-upon-Avon can continue to thrive as a town that meets the needs of local people and as a visitor destination of international significance. The strategy has been produced by the County and District Councils with support from David Tucker of David Tucker Associates.

The strategy seeks to complement the Neighbourhood Plan that is currently in draft form and supports the vision for Stratford-upon-Avon contained in the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy 2011-31. This states that:

*Stratford-upon-Avon will have enhanced its role as a town of international standing that satisfies the expectations of residents, businesses and visitors. More tourists will visit the town and stay longer, in part achieved through an expansion of its cultural offer. The town's role as the main shopping and services centre in the District will have been strengthened. Significant progress will have been made on the regeneration of an extensive area of mostly outworn and underused land adjacent to the canal. New and existing companies will have located on high quality employment land on the periphery of the town, with excellent access to the strategic road network. A new link to the strategic network from the south of the River Avon will have been provided via a western/south western relief road. Traffic in the town centre will be managed more effectively to reduce its impact on the environment.*

This Transport Strategy supports the achievement of this vision by providing a framework for maintaining and improving the transport network over the next 15 years. It builds on previous work that has considered future transport needs and draws this into a single integrated strategy that addresses the complex transport issues being faced.

In preparing this strategy, the County and District Council have listened to the public and talked to interest groups and organisations to better understand their concerns and requirements from the transport network. These issues are captured in the Stratford-upon-Avon Area Transport Strategy Key Issues document which has underpinned the development of the strategy. There is a high degree of agreement on what the key issues are, with a primary concern being the increasing level of traffic congestion and the impact future housing and employment growth will have on the character of the town and a transport infrastructure already operating under considerable strain. The strategy includes measures designed to tackle congestion and improve the transport system and town environment to meet the development needs and benefit residents, businesses and visitors.

## **Overall context**

### **1. Socio-economic issues**

#### **1.1 Economic overview**

The local economy in Stratford-on-Avon District is comparatively strong compared to wider Warwickshire and West Midlands economies.

##### ***The visitor economy***

Stratford-upon-Avon is home to the world's most important Shakespeare heritage sites, including his birthplace. Approximately six million people visit the District each year (2.5 million to Stratford-upon-Avon town), spending around £300m per year and supporting over 7,000 jobs. The revenue derived from tourism is crucial to the vitality of the local economy.

##### ***Employment levels and patterns***

Unemployment across the District is low, with 0.3% of workers claiming jobseekers allowance in May 2016. This is lower than the UK average (1.8%) and West Midlands average (2.2%). There is an imbalance between the number of jobs in the District and its working population. An increasing number of residents commute to higher paid employment outside the District, while lower paid jobs are often filled by people coming into the District from adjoining areas. These commuting patterns impose significant pressures on the road network.

#### **1.2 Public Health Context**

The population of Stratford-on-Avon District benefits from relatively good health, with levels of obesity, health deprivation and average life expectancy better than the national average. However, there is an imbalance in general quality of health across the District, with a difference in life expectancy of over six years between the least and most deprived areas.

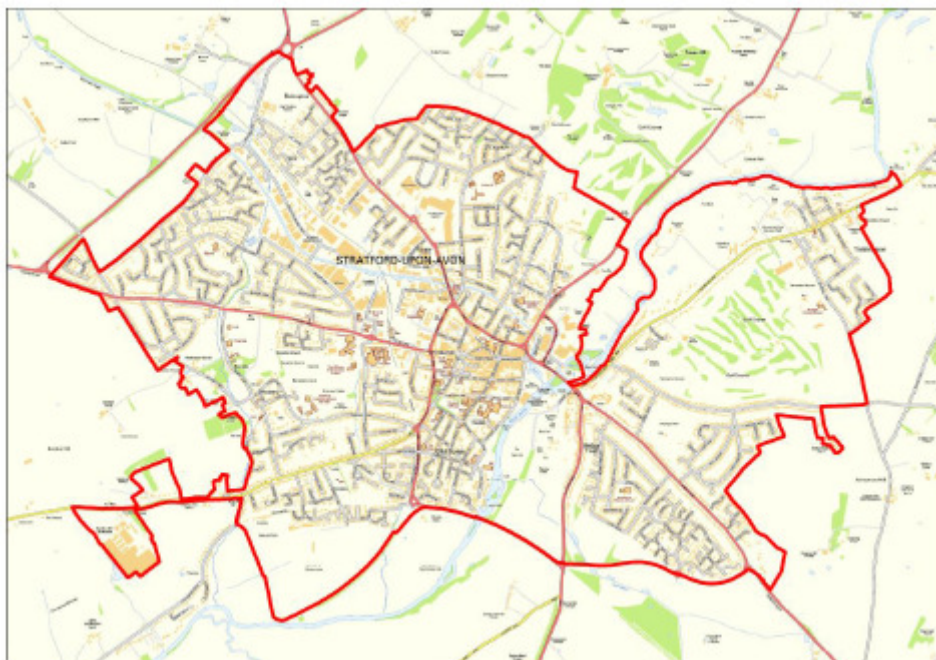
### **2. Environmental constraints**

#### **2.1 Air quality**

Stratford-upon-Avon town is covered by an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), shown in figure 1, which was declared in 2010 as a result of historically measured exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objectives. No such exceedances have been measured in recent years,

however continued monitoring under the Local Air Quality Action Plan is still in effect.

**Figure 1: Stratford-upon-Avon Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) boundary**



Road transport is the main contributor of polluting emissions. Transport infrastructure and behavioural change measures that reduce congestion, improve traffic flows and encourage modal shift to sustainable modes of travel will be key to achieving an acceptable level of air quality in Stratford-upon-Avon whilst providing benefits to public health and the economy. Any development proposals for the town will need to show that air quality will not deteriorate as a result, in line with the Air Quality Strategy in Warwickshire County Council's Local Transport Plan (2011-2026).

## **2.2 Climate change and flood risk**

Stratford-upon-Avon District is susceptible to flooding and was badly affected by flood events in 1998 and 2007, which caused considerable damage to property and put lives at risk. The Environment Agency has mapped the main areas subject to flood risk and these cover a significant amount of land within the District, including the River Avon valley through Stratford-upon-Avon town. Future development must not increase the risk of flooding.

## **2.3 Historic built environment**

Stratford-upon-Avon has a unique built environment with a historic town centre with many listed buildings, including the Grade 1 listed Shakespeare's birthplace and Clopton Bridge (also a Scheduled Ancient Monument).

A key aspiration is to improve the public realm in the town centre, including a route known as the 'Historic Spine' to promote and support the visitor experience and attractiveness of the town.

The historic nature of Stratford-upon-Avon means that the road layout is constrained. This means that there are competing demands for space on the transport network. Congestion issues quickly develop when there is network disruption, particularly during the summer when tourist numbers are at their highest.

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### 3. Transport Problems and Opportunities

Stratford-upon-Avon frequently suffers from traffic congestion, particularly during the morning and evening weekday peaks, as well as congestion associated with tourist traffic, predominantly on summer weekends and bank holidays.

#### 3.1 Congestion Hotspots

There are some notable areas of congestion within Stratford where average speeds across the morning and evening peak are generally less than 20mph. These routes have been identified as:

- A422 Alcester Road between Stratford station and Bridgeway Gyratory.
- A3400 Birmingham Road between the A46 Bishopton Island and the Bridgeway Gyratory.
- Clopton Road/Arden Street/Grove Road.
- A439 Warwick Road south westbound towards the Bridgeway Gyratory.

The Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy has set a target of providing at least 14,600 new homes and 35 hectares of employment land by 2031. Locations are dispersed across the District, however a significant proportion of the development is focused in and near to Stratford-upon-Avon and it is anticipated that the population of Stratford-on-Avon District will increase by 24,500 (20%) to 145,000 between 2011 and 2031. Without mitigation this growth will worsen congestion in the town.

#### 3.2 Factors contributing to transport problems

A range of factors contribute to the local congestion that occurs on parts of the highway network, particularly during peak periods. These are briefly outlined below:

##### (i) High Car Dependency

**High car ownership** – Car ownership is high compared to county-wide and national levels and this translates into high car dependency for travel to work (71% compared to 59% for the national average). Census data shows that between 2001 and 2011 the number of cars owned by Stratford-on-Avon District residents increased by 10,732. Assuming this growth continues at the same rate it can be expected a further 29,155 cars will be owned by Stratford-on-Avon District residents between 2011 and 2031.

**Distance and mode of travel to work** – Almost a quarter of journeys to work within Stratford town are less than 5km (3 miles), with 15% less than 2km (1.2

miles). These distances are appropriate for walking or cycling. However, Census data shows that the pedestrian and cycle mode share for journeys to work is already high (19% compared to the national average of 13%), so the potential for increasing this mode share is fairly limited.

**Park and Ride usage** – with high car ownership and usage, there is the potential to capture this market and convert to Park & Ride (P&R) for town centre trips. There is currently only one P&R facility which is located adjacent to the A46 at Bishopton. This serves visitors approaching Stratford-upon-Avon from the east, north and west. Weekday usage levels are well below the site capacity with the availability and relative low cost of town centre parking acting against the use of the P&R. Furthermore, a lack of bus priority on the route into town means there is no journey time saving for using the P&R. A Park and Ride service that operated from the Rosebird Centre to the south of Stratford-upon-Avon closed in 2015. The service was provided by the developers of the Rosebird Centre for a limited period as a requirement of a S106 planning agreement. Introducing additional P&R facilities with measures that encourage their use could reduce traffic flow into the town centre.

## (ii) **Town centre through trips and river crossings**

**River crossings** - There are only two River Avon crossings for vehicles in Stratford-upon-Avon: Clopton Bridge, which is Grade 1 listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument, is a substandard single carriageway bridge in the town centre; Seven Meadows Road is a modern single carriageway bridge situated south of the centre. There are no other options for vehicles to cross the River Avon in the vicinity of the town and both of these bridges bring traffic into central areas.

**Through traffic** – Whilst there is little long distance through traffic in the town there is a significant amount of local traffic that passes through the town centre without stopping. The majority of this traffic in the peak periods is travelling from the Shipston Road to Warwick Road, or vice versa with a significant proportion also travelling via the town centre from Birmingham Road to Shipston Road (and vice versa) and Banbury Road to Warwick Road (and vice versa). This traffic is concentrated on the two river crossings in the town, adding to congestion. The provision of relief roads on the western, southern and potentially eastern fringes of Stratford-upon-Avon gives the opportunity to route traffic away from central areas.

## (iii) **School travel contributing to local congestion**

The mode of travel for journeys to school is varied. While a high number of pupils walk to school (approximately 35%), a similar number travel by bus

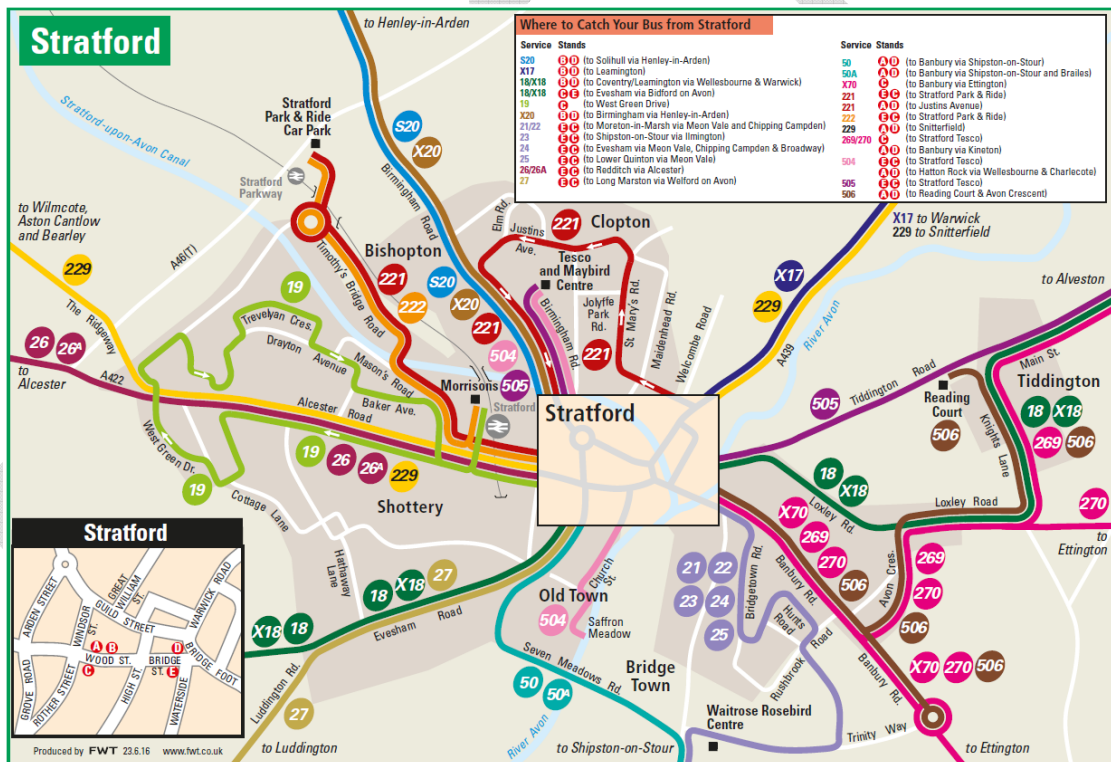


(29%) or car (27%). There is an opportunity to reduce car usage and congestion by encouraging school journeys to be made by more sustainable modes.

**(iv) Public Transport Provision**

**Bus Network** – the bus network is made up of a few inter-urban services to Leamington Spa, Redditch, Evesham, Banbury, Warwick and Birmingham, along with less frequent services connecting to local service villages. The bus service network illustrated in figure 2 offers reasonable coverage in the urban area although services are patchy and there are limited evening services. Feedback from the Traffic Summits suggests that better bus services were needed, particularly to the east and north of the town.

**Figure 2: Stratford-upon Avon bus network**



**Rail Network** – Stratford-upon-Avon is served by two rail stations. Stratford Parkway is located approximately 1 mile from the town centre, adjacent to the A46, and the town station is on the edge of the town centre with access from Birmingham Road and Alcester Road. There are two main operators on the line; Chiltern Railways and London Midland. London Midland run services every 20 to 30 minutes to Birmingham during peak hours and every hour in the off-peak. Chiltern Railways run services to London Marylebone approximately every 1 ½ to 2 hours with the majority requiring a change at Leamington and taking more than 2 hours. There is an aspiration to improve

rail connectivity, particularly to London and Birmingham Airport. Currently there are sufficient car parking facilities at both stations.

**(v) Parking Supply**

Parking availability is mostly good, with over 2,800 public car park spaces within Stratford town centre, as well as other privately owned car park sites and on-street parking. There are also an estimated 5,000 free spaces provided by local employers within Stratford-upon-Avon. Parking charges are relatively affordable; up to one hour free parking is available at Bridgefoot car park, while rates for longer stays of 12+ hours range from £4 up to £20. Signs on approach roads and across the town centre direct motorists to car parks and provide information on the availability of spaces. Free parking is available at the Maybird Retail Park for up to 4 hours.

**(vi) Role of Walking and Cycling**

There are walking and cycling routes in both the urban area and surrounding countryside. However there are missing links in the network and some existing facilities need upgrading to encourage more local journeys to be made by foot or cycle. For example, there is no dedicated provision for cyclists to travel from the south of the town to the town centre and there is insufficient provision for cyclists within the town centre.

## Objectives

### 1. **Reduce high car dependency particularly for travel to work and school**

With high car ownership and a substantial supply of affordable town centre parking there is little incentive to use alternative means of travel into the town. Achieving a significant switch to alternative transport modes requires a change to the whole philosophy of travel into and around the town and surrounding areas. Discouraging car journeys into the central area and diverting through traffic away from central areas will form part of the solution, but reliable and convenient substitute forms of travel offering a genuine alternative to the private car will have to be provided to change travel habits.

As a predominantly rural district car dependency is high and a high proportion of visitors travel by car. It is important to provide the opportunities and incentive to transfer from car to other forms of transport for the 'final mile' of the journey.

### 2. **Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in Stratford Town Centre**

There is very little long distance through traffic in Stratford town centre, however there are a high number of cross town trips which route over the existing bridges and through either the Bridgeway gyratory or Arden Street adding to congestion in and around the town. Future development within Stratford and surrounding areas will put further pressure on these routes unless alternatives are provided. To facilitate these cross town trips and reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the central areas of Stratford-upon-Avon new road links are needed between the key radials to route traffic away from the town centre. This will require at least one further river crossing.

### 3. **Reduce the negative impact of traffic on air pollution**

The County and District Councils aim to provide an attractive, clean and safe environment and are committed to protecting and, where necessary, improving local air quality. The level of air pollution experienced within the urban area of Stratford-upon-Avon generally, and the specific worst-case exposure locations, needs to be improved.

Traffic is the major cause of air pollution and emits pollution right by where people live, work and circulate and is made worse when traffic is slow moving or stationary. In order to improve air quality, measures will need to be implemented that reduce traffic generally, reduce congestion and improve traffic flows. In addition, detailed assessments of the impact of development proposals on traffic flows will be undertaken on an individual and cumulative basis through the planning application process. Specific measures will need to be identified and put in place should air quality be predicted to worsen from the January 2010 situation as a result of such development. The most recent Air Quality Progress Report for Stratford-on-Avon District Council (May 2014)

did not identify any significant changes to emission levels in Stratford-upon-Avon that would lead to a deterioration in air quality, having taken into account the scale and location of development identified in the Core Strategy.

**4. Protect the historic core of Stratford Town and support the visitor economy**

2.5 million visitors a year come to enjoy the historic nature of the town and its facilities. Currently they enjoy car free areas such as Henley Street and, to a lesser extent, Waterside. However, the impact of traffic on routes to and from the Station and other key gateway points such as Bridgeway and Bridgefoot and within the main shopping areas can detract from the visitor experience. Visitors want access without the impact of traffic and congestion, including space to linger and enjoy their surroundings. Currently there is limited pedestrian circulation space on key routes in the town centre and some pavements become overcrowded during peak periods.

Consideration needs to be given to measures that improve the town centre environment such as giving greater priority and space to pedestrians and cyclists, reducing the volume of traffic and improving pedestrian routes into the town centre from key gateways. Any changes made to the transport infrastructure must be sympathetic to the key characteristics and features of Stratford-upon-Avon and seek to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the town.

**5. Provide increased resilience to the transport network**

Special events held throughout the year attract increased visitors. At present these are managed on an ad-hoc basis and frequently lead to increased congestion affecting the normal operation of the town and surrounding areas. Sufficient provision to cater for these visitors needs to be created within the transport system.

**6. Improve road safety for all users**

Reductions in traffic volumes and congestion together with improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will improve safety for all. Any new infrastructure must prioritise safety.

**7. Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives**

The delivery of the housing and employment growth identified in the Stratford-upon-Avon District Core Strategy will increase pressure on the transport system. Analysis has been carried out to assess the impact this will have on the transport system and identify mitigation measures necessary to ensure the network operates satisfactorily in the future. Further work will be conducted as developments come forward through the planning process to establish the transport issues and identify measures necessary to deal with anticipated transport impacts. This must embrace the interventions set out in this strategy.

## **The Strategy**

### **1 Existing Stratford Transport Strategy**

The existing transport strategy for Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider District is contained within the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-26 (LTP). The strategy covers Southern and Western Warwickshire, which includes most of Stratford-on-Avon District along with the rural west of Warwick District. It is based on the original Stratford Transport Strategy developed by the County Council in 2003. This was reviewed following an unsuccessful Major Scheme Bid to the Department for Transport and as part of the development of the Urban Design Framework for Stratford-upon-Avon in 2007. The review sought to establish the extent of support for extending pedestrian priority within the town centre without the additional highway capacity which would have been provided by the Stratford Western Relief Road (now known as the West of Shottery Relief Road).

The resulting strategy identified a number of schemes to address known transport issues. A number of these, such as Stratford Parkway and the improvements to Waterside/Southern Lane, have been delivered, while some other previously proposed schemes are no longer being pursued. Pressure for housing and employment growth across the District and particularly within Stratford-upon-Avon has increased considerably since the previous transport strategy was developed, and an adopted Local Plan (Core Strategy) is now in place to provide the strategic planning framework for the District's future development needs up to 2031. With increasing congestion within the town and problems which were prevalent in 2011 remaining today, the existing transport strategy needs to be revisited to take a more progressive, long term view of what transport interventions are needed to support the town and wider District.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Transport Strategy, which covers the town's immediate environs and key strategy links, updates the Southern and Western Warwickshire Area Strategy.

## 2 Key themes of the new strategy:

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

#### (i) Aim

To improve the town's environment and economic vitality by:

- Reducing traffic within the urban area, and particularly in the historic core.
- Focusing car park provision on out of centre locations, including Park and Ride
- Improving the opportunities for travel by public transport, on foot or by bicycle.
- Implementing the necessary highway and junction improvements to support the above demand management initiatives.

#### (ii) Context

In Stratford-upon-Avon, most trip attractors such as schools, shops and employment are located north of the river. These generate a significant demand for movement from residential areas south of the river and the rural areas to the south of the town as well as significant demand for cross-town movements north of the river, most of which have to pass through the congested town centre.

The above factors mean that a number of routes and junctions in the town experience significant traffic congestion during commuter and shopping peak periods, tourist/visitor peaks and major special events.

The significant scale of growth proposed in the adopted Core Strategy and the prospect of further growth in the future requires a radical and progressive approach to manage increasing traffic demands in the historic core of the town and on radial routes. There is a particular need to reduce the environmental impact of increasing traffic levels on Clopton Bridge, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which carries approximately 23,000 vehicles per day including a large number of HGVs.

#### **Previous Work**

Over recent years considerable work has been undertaken by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) to identify schemes to address existing transport problems and accommodate future transport demands arising from new development. This culminated in a series of Strategic Transport Assessments (STAs) which informed the transport evidence base for the Core Strategy that was adopted by SDC in

July 2016. The STA identified key highway infrastructure interventions essential to facilitate the housing and employment growth identified in the Core Strategy. These are as follows:

- (a) **Stratford Transport Package.** Schemes to provide additional capacity at key pinch points on the local and strategic highway networks in and around Stratford upon Avon.
- (b) **West of Shottery Relief Road (WSRR)** - linking the A46 at Wildmoor with the B439 Evesham Road. This road has planning permission as part of development proposals on land to the west of Shottery.
- (c) **South Western Relief Road (SWRR)** – linking the B439 Evesham Road with the A3400 Shipston Road. This road is safeguarded in the Core Strategy but is still subject to detailed design and approval. This road will provide an additional river crossing.

In combination, the WSRR and SWRR will draw some traffic away from the town centre and the existing river crossings by providing a full western relief road between the A46 Alcester Road and A3400 Shipston Road which is essential to support the scale of development proposed at Long Marston Airfield to the south of Stratford.

### ***Stratford Traffic Summits***

In response to local concerns that traffic congestion in and around Stratford-upon-Avon is having a detrimental effect on movement and the local economy, which would be exacerbated by new development, a series of Traffic Summits were organised by Nadhim Zahawi MP. These identified the following priorities:

- (a) To address traffic congestion problems on A3400 Birmingham Road.
- (b) The need for a Third River Crossing/Relief Road/Bypass.
- (c) The need for an overarching transport strategy.

The County Council has developed and undertaken initial consultation on improvement options for Birmingham Road and is currently refining scheme proposals. The Council also commissioned a study to evaluate the costs and benefits of providing additional highway capacity in the area. The study scope included considering relief road options and the effects these would have on congestion in the town.

### ***Further Highway Improvements***

Both the Strategic Transport Assessment and the study considering future road capacity in and around Stratford-upon-Avon conclude that in addition to the proposed WSRR / SWRR route, an eastern relief road (ERR) could further

relieve traffic congestion in the town centre and on Clopton Bridge by providing an alternative route to the M40. If an ERR was forthcoming consideration could be given to imposing traffic restrictions on Clopton Bridge, for example by introducing a weight restriction. It is likely that an ERR would need to be funded by development.

There is limited scope to provide additional highway capacity in and around the town centre to absorb the anticipated increase in traffic volume without compulsory purchase of land and demolition of property; an approach which is unlikely to be supported. Previous attempts to promote an inner relief road in Stratford (Southern Relief Road Northern Extension) were not supported at Local Plan Inquiries during the late 1990s. However, options to provide an all-purpose link connecting Alcester Road and Birmingham Road via Western Road and either Wharf Road/Maybrook Road or Hamlet Way are being considered as part of proposals for reducing congestion on Birmingham Road. In addition, measures that make best use of the existing road space and improve traffic flow, particularly at junctions, will continue to be explored.

### **Stratford town centre**

Relatively high volumes of traffic use the town centre streets to access local services and facilities or as a local through route. This level of traffic creates conflict between vehicles and pedestrians in the town centre that will worsen as traffic grows as a result of further development in the District. Over the last 15 to 20 years other major UK tourist destinations including York, Durham, Chester and Salisbury have improved the attractiveness and economic vitality of their historic centres by restricting general traffic, increasing pedestrian priority and investing in Park and Ride. The function and design of town centre streets in Stratford could be revised to: provide more pleasant streets with more space for pedestrians, better facilities for cyclists, lower traffic speeds and less street clutter; improve air quality; improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists; and enhance the setting of historic buildings.

Approaches that could be considered to enhance the town centre environment include:

- Redesigning the way in which traffic accesses and moves through the town centre.
- Introducing vehicular access restrictions. These could be applied to vehicle type or day of the week / time of day.
- Reallocating road space to provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The creation of shared space areas in which the level of segregation between pedestrians and vehicles is reduced.
- Full pedestrianisation of selected streets.



### **Parking**

The widespread availability of parking within Stratford (outlined in section 3) acts to draw traffic into the central areas of the town and contributes to congestion. The existing Park and Ride facility at Bishopton serves visitors approaching Stratford from the north of the river, but is underused in part due to the availability and relatively low cost of town centre parking and the lack of journey time saving from using Park and Ride. Focussing long-stay parking provision at out of town centre locations, including through the provision of additional and improved Park and Ride facilities would reduce the volume of traffic travelling into central areas and ease congestion.

#### **(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy**

- Reduce high car dependency particularly for travel to work and school trips.
- Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in the town centre.
- Reduce negative impact of traffic on air quality.
- Protect the historic core of the town and support the visitor economy.
- Provide increased resilience to the transport network.
- Improve road safety for all users.
- Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives.

#### **(iv) Policies**

**Policy 1** The County Council, District Council and other agencies will work together to apply an integrated approach to managing the number, distribution and impact of vehicle movements within the urban area of Stratford-upon-Avon.

**Policy 2** Development proposals will be assessed for the effect they would have, individually and cumulatively, on the generation of traffic movements within and through the town and for their impact on the highway network. Where appropriate, a planning application should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and/or Travel Plan.

Contributions from developers to transport infrastructure will be sought through s106 Agreements, s278 Agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy, as appropriate. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan provides the basis for deciding how CIL payments are to be spent on transport-related projects in the town.

Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. A full western relief road between the A46 Alcester Road and A3400 Shipston Road, including an additional crossing of the River Avon.
2. 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.
3. Provision of a link road with facilities for pedestrians and cyclists between Alcester Road and Birmingham Road via Western Road and either Hamlet Way or Wharf Road/Maybrook Road to ease congestion on alternative routes.
4. Impose restrictions on vehicular access to Clopton Bridge (requires delivery of an eastern relief road).
5. Traffic management measures that improve traffic flow and the conditions for walking and cycling such as junction improvements, the use of modern technology and specific measures for buses. This will also include the Birmingham Road corridor enhancements.
6. Improve the infrastructure and facilities for cycling and walking.
7. Revise the function and design of town centre streets to reduce traffic and improve the public realm, including providing better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.
8. Focus parking at out of town centre locations, including through the provision of improved Park and Ride facilities.
9. Create additional resilience within the transport network to manage the influx of visitors associated with large events through the establishment of temporary Park and Ride facilities and enhanced public transport.
10. Review direction signs to route road users on key strategic routes and away from the town centre.
11. Use signage to encourage road users to park in Park and Ride facilities.
12. Provide frequent and swift bus services, with bus priority, between Park and Ride facilities and the town centre, via other key destinations.
13. Encourage sustainable travel options including:
  - a. Promote smarter choices through the 'Choose How You Move' initiative
  - b. Promote car sharing initiatives
  - c. Support workplace / school travel planning.

## Theme 2: Strategic Road, Rail and Air Links

### (i) Aim

To ensure Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider District benefit from good strategic connectivity to all key locations and to maximise the opportunities to access major new facilities such as HS2 and the UK Central development at Solihull

### (ii) Context

Good strategic connectivity is vital to ensuring that local and sub-regional economies are vibrant and can maintain and attract high quality, high value businesses who want to invest and grow. Good business to business connectivity is essential for companies such as Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and its supply chain. The strong tourist economy of the area also necessitates good strategic connectivity, including access to aviation facilities to meet national and international travel demands.

Stratford District benefits from strategic road and rail connectivity, although both require further investment. The construction of the A46 Stratford Northern Bypass in 1986 and the arrival of the M42 and M40 motorways in the late 1980s/early 1990s delivered a major uplift in strategic road connectivity to large parts of South Warwickshire. Key accesses to the M40 are located at Junctions 15 (Longbridge), 14/13 (Leamington Spa) and 12 (Gaydon), all of which have seen some form of improvement in the last ten years. Smart Motorway provision (all lane running) has been provided on significant sections of the M5/M6/M42 Motorway Box and it is proposed to extend this from M42 Junction 3A to Junction 16 of the M40. There is an aspiration to extend this farther south to Junction 12 of the M40 and onwards to the A34 north of Oxford (Junction 9).

The strategic importance of the A46 as a trunk road has grown substantially in recent years as congestion on the M5/M6/M42 Motorway Box has increased. Major improvements have been delivered at M40 Junction 15 (Longbridge) and A45/A46 Tollbar End, with further improvements scheduled to take place in the near future at B4082 Walsgrave, A428 Binley, C32 Stoneleigh and A425/A4177 Stanks. Wider improvements to other sections of the A46 corridor have been identified, but do not currently form part of Highways England's investment plan. A Multi-Agency Group and associated Member Partnership have been established for the A46, on which both the County and District Council are represented. The long term vision and aim for the A46 is for a major improvement to the whole of the corridor between the M40 at Warwick and the M5 at Ashchurch in order to improve strategic connectivity to

the area and deliver a genuine alternative for traffic between the M1/M69 and M5.

Stratford-upon-Avon benefits from good connections by rail to Birmingham. There are regular but infrequent services to Warwick and Leamington Spa with journey times which are considerably greater than for the same journey by car. Longer distance journeys towards Oxford, the Thames Valley and London are less attractive and services to Coventry typically take more than 1.5 hours. There is an aspiration to improve all of these services. The town has recently seen a reduction in through off-peak services to the capital (a change at Leamington Spa is now required). Late evening and weekend services also require improvement, particularly to support the evening economy of the town including the RSC.

Birmingham Airport in the adjoining Solihull Metropolitan Borough provides Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider District with access to a number of national and international flight destinations and serves an important role in bringing visitors into the area. The road connections between Stratford and the airport are currently relatively good. However, journey times are likely to increase as congestion increases on the M42 and the proposed HS2 interchange and the wider UK Central development progress. In order to provide an effective transport link for visitors, it will be vital that there is a viable public transport offer for making these journeys, with the provision of a quality rail service critical to this.

**(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy**

- Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in the town centre.
- Reduce negative impact of traffic on air quality.
- Protect the historic core of the town and support the visitor economy.
- Provide increased resilience to the transport network.
- Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives.

**(iv) Policies**

<p><b>Policy 3</b> The County and District Councils will work in partnership with other agencies (e.g. Transport for West Midlands, Highways England, the Rail Industry, Birmingham Airport etc.) in order to facilitate and/or deliver improvements to the strategic connectivity of Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider District.</p>
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Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. Enhance the capacity, safety and performance of the M40, including provision of Smart Motorways between Junctions 16 (Henley-in-Arden) and 12 (Gaydon), with a longer term aspiration to extend this south to Junction 9 (Oxford).
2. Enhance the capacity, safety and performance of the A46 between the M40 and the M5. This will include junction improvements at Marraway (A46/A439), Bishopton (A46/A3400) and Wildmoor (A46/A422) and wider corridor improvements (e.g. dualling) to improve the strategic offer of the route and add resilience to the Strategic Road Network (in particular the A42/M42 and Birmingham Motorway Box).
3. Improve the strategic rail offer of Stratford-upon-Avon, including the frequency and journey time of services to/from Warwick, Leamington Spa, Coventry, Birmingham, Oxford, the Thames Valley and London.
4. Provide improved rail connectivity between Stratford-upon-Avon and Birmingham International to improve access to Birmingham Airport, the proposed HS2 interchange and wider UK Central area.

### **Theme 3: Public transport provision within Stratford-upon-Avon and across South Warwickshire and neighbouring authorities**

#### **(i) Aim**

To provide a high quality network of public transport services within Stratford-upon-Avon and connectivity with key locations across South Warwickshire and neighbouring areas.

#### **(ii) Context**

Stratford-upon-Avon is relatively well served by public transport, although the level of connectivity varies. Demand is constrained by factors including frequency of services, duration and comfort of journey and high ticket costs as well as the comparative convenience and relative low cost of car travel.

Two railway lines terminate in Stratford-upon-Avon with regular rail services provided by London Midland to Birmingham via either Henley-in-Arden (the North Warwickshire Line) or Solihull, and regular but infrequent services by Chiltern Railways to Leamington Spa via Warwick. Connections to the wider rail network can be made via Birmingham, Solihull and Leamington Spa. Stratford Parkway was opened in 2013 on the northern side of Stratford to provide easier access to rail services for people living to the north and west of Stratford and alleviate congestion within Stratford-upon-Avon by reducing journeys to the town station.

Service improvements that could benefit current and potential passengers include:

- Additional peak time direct services between Stratford-upon-Avon and Solihull. This would be particularly beneficial in light of the planned expansion of Solihull town centre, part of the UK Central development.
- Additional direct services to and from Warwick and Leamington Spa, and improved onward connectivity to Coventry and Birmingham Airport. Direct services to Warwick and Leamington Spa currently operate approximately every 1.5 to 2 hours during the day.
- Improving station facilities and accessibility of rail services on the North Warwickshire Line.

The bus infrastructure includes regular commercial services between Stratford-upon-Avon and Evesham, Alcester, Henley-on-Arden, Wellesbourne Warwick and Leamington Spa, all of which have available passenger capacity. Local services around Stratford-upon-Avon and evening services are limited. Feedback from the Stratford Traffic Summits suggested that better bus

services were needed particularly to the east and north of the town. It is also important that new developments have regular and frequent bus services to the town centre.

A key barrier to bus use is journey length and issues of punctuality and service reliability which are exacerbated in Stratford-upon-Avon by congestion. Overcoming these problems has the potential to increase patronage, reduce operator costs and encourage operators to introduce additional services. Furthermore, improved journey time reliability enables operators to allocate less service 'catch-up' time during which buses layover in the town centre.

Service quality improvements, such as providing high quality buses, more frequent services and drivers trained in customer care, along with investment in roadside infrastructure at bus stops and improved waiting facilities have been shown to improve patronage and could do the same on routes into and out of Stratford.

Most inter-urban public transport services are operated on a commercial basis by private companies with limited County Council involvement or support. Despite this the Council is able to influence service provision by, for example, engaging with operators and stakeholders and investing in service development infrastructure, such as bus stop facilities and Parkway facilities.

**(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy**

- Reduce high car dependency particularly for journey to work and school trips.
- Reduce negative impact of traffic on air pollution.
- Protect the historic core of Stratford Town and support the visitor economy.
- Improve road safety for all users.
- Providing resilience to the transport network.
- Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives.

**(iv) Policies**

**Policy 4** The County Council and District Council will work together and with other agencies and the public transport industry to develop a quality network of public transport services and facilities that meet the needs of current and potential passengers.

Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. The introduction of enhanced or new public transport services to meet the needs of existing and potential passengers.
2. The use of low emission vehicles will be promoted with potential use of electric buses in sensitive areas.
3. Introduction of new and improved Park and Ride facilities on the key radial routes in Stratford-upon-Avon.
4. Traffic management measures will be introduced to improve vehicle flow and prioritise buses to improve the punctuality, reliability and journey times of bus services. This will include providing frequent rapid bus routes for Park and Ride services.
5. Passenger facilities will be improved through the provision of modern buses, real time bus information and better bus stops and waiting areas.
6. Emerging or latent demand for bus travel will be met by adapting existing services or introducing new services. New developments in or near to Stratford-upon-Avon will have bus connections to the town centre, more evening buses will be provided and shuttle services introduced between key central destinations such as Bridgeway, town centre, railway station, Maybird Centre and Park and Ride sites.
7. The impact of buses on town centre locations will be reduced by encouraging operators to use the layover facilities next to the railway station and at Park and Ride sites.
8. Local rail services will be improved through the addition of a morning and evening peak time direct service between Stratford-upon-Avon and Birmingham via Solihull and additional direct services to Warwick and Leamington Spa.
9. The station facilities and accessibility of rail services on the North Warwickshire Line will be improved.



## **Theme 4: Encourage walking and cycling, particularly in Stratford Town.**

### **(i) Aim**

To provide the local conditions and infrastructure to enable cycling and walking to be a genuine alternative to car travel and the natural choice for shorter journeys within Stratford-upon-Avon and by so doing to improve the town centre environment and economic vitality of the town and make a positive contribution to the quality of life and the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

### **(ii) Context:**

Cycling and walking are an ideal mode of transport for short local trips and the compact nature and mostly flat relief of Stratford-upon-Avon is particularly suited to cycling and walking. However the volume of journeys made by foot and bicycle is relatively low. Just 2.1% of adults living in Stratford-on-Avon District cycle for utility purposes at least once a week compared with 47.4% in Cambridge (the figure for Cambridgeshire is 15.6%). Achieving a significant shift from driving to cycling and walking requires changes to be made to the highway and town infrastructure to provide more facilities, space and priority for cyclists and pedestrians.

Increasing the levels of walking and cycling will reduce congestion, improve air quality and benefit the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

#### ***Cycling***

Stratford-upon-Avon has the basis of an excellent network of cycle routes. For example, Summerton Way provides an off road route to the west of the town centre to Stratford College and there are quality off road routes to the south of Stratford, for example those that connect Waitrose to Swans Nest Lane and Banbury Road. The aim is to complete a network of high quality routes that enable people to make the majority of short journeys by bicycle. Key gaps within the network that limit cycling include:

- Safe and accessible routes across the River Avon: Lucy's Mill Bridge to the west is inaccessible to cyclists; cycling is not permitted on Tramway Bridge; and Clopton Bridge carries high volumes of motorised traffic including large numbers of HGVs, is narrow and does not have room for dedicated cycle lanes.
- A link from the town centre to the south-east of Stratford and Tiddington. Currently cyclists wanting to make this journey need to negotiate the heavily trafficked Bridgefoot junctions to the south of Clopton Bridge.

- The provision of cycling routes across the town centre that minimise potential conflict with pedestrians and motorised transport.
- Connections to visitor destinations including Mary Arden's Farm, Anne Hathaway's Cottage and Charlecote Park.

An increasing number of cyclists are prepared to cycle significant distances for leisure and as part of a commute. Stratford is well served by the National Cycle Network which direct cyclists along a combination of off-road routes and quiet roads suitable for cycling. Route 5 connects Stratford-upon-Avon to Shipston-on-Stour in the south and to Redditch in the north-west. Route 41 connects Stratford to Honeybourne in the west and Leamington Spa in the east. Opportunities exist to improve these routes, for example by improving the surface of the Stratford Greenway that is used by both route 5 and 41, providing additional surfaced off-road cycle routes and by making the existing routes more direct. There are also opportunities to supplement the existing National Cycle Network with signed routes to locations not currently served such as Ryon Hill Business Park and Alcester.

The type of cycle infrastructure that will be provided will depend on a range of factors including road conditions, traffic volume and speeds and the extent and layout of the highway. Encouraging cycling is not simply a case of providing routes, cyclists also require convenient and secure places to leave their bicycle at their destination. Signage that directs cyclists to primary destinations and provides distance and predicted trip duration gives them confidence and will be particularly helpful to visitors and new cyclists less familiar with the cycle route network and geography of the town.

The London bike hire scheme has generally been considered a success and this model could be replicated within Stratford-upon-Avon to enable visitors and residents who do not have one to make journeys by bicycle.

### **Walking**

Key pedestrian routes within Stratford-upon-Avon such as Bridge Street, High Street and Tramway Bridge are frequently overcrowded. The existing layout of the town centre with narrow footways and high levels of car access creates conflict between pedestrians and road users and restricts the free-flow and circulation of pedestrians. The existing pedestrian routes to the town centre from the station and coach and car parks on Bridge Foot require pedestrians to negotiate busy roads and junctions and do not create a positive first impression. The aim is to improve facilities for pedestrians to make walking a more attractive option by improving the routes between key destinations and providing more space to circulate.

**(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy:**

- Reduce high car dependency particularly for journey to work and school trips.
- Reduce through trips for motorised vehicles in Stratford town centre.
- Reduce negative impact of traffic on air pollution.
- Protect the historic core of Stratford Town and support the visitor economy.
- Improve road safety for all users.
- Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives.

**(iv) Policies:**

<p><b>Policy 5</b> The County Council and District Council will work together and with other agencies to develop a high quality network of walking and cycling routes and related facilities that support and encourage walking and cycling.</p>
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Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. Complete a network of high quality and safe cycling and walking routes within Stratford-upon-Avon including:
  - Connecting the south of the town with the town centre.
  - Improved connections to visitor destinations
  - Improved routes into the town centre from gateway locations such as Stratford town railway station, car parks, Park and Ride sites and the Bridgeway coach park.
  - Provide cycle routes that meet user requirements, maximise safety and are designed in accordance with national guidance. Where appropriate, provide routes that segregate cyclists from other road users.
  - Ensure that the design of highway infrastructure meets the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
  - Ensure sufficient provision of conveniently located cycle parking facilities.
2. Improve provision for cyclists and pedestrians within the town centre by reallocating road space for walking and cycling, prioritising cyclist and pedestrian access and introducing 20mph speed limits in appropriate locations.

3. Improve and develop the network of inter-urban cycle routes between Stratford-upon-Avon and neighbouring towns and other key destinations in the surrounding countryside including Alcester, Warwick, Wellesbourne, Long Marston, Charlecote and Ryon Hill Business Park.
4. Improve integration with other transport modes including by providing a better route for cyclists and pedestrians between the railway station and town centre and fully connecting the Stratford town and Parkway railway stations to the cycle route network.
5. Implement a cycle hire scheme based on the London scheme, with docking stations provided at strategic locations across the town.
6. Improve route signage for cyclists and pedestrians.
7. Offer cycle training to schools, businesses and individuals to help people develop the skills and confidence to take advantage of the cycle route network and surrounding road network.
8. Promote the availability of cycle and walking facilities through measures such as:
  - Promoting Smarter Choices through the County Council's 'Choose How You Move' initiative.
  - Producing and distributing cycle route guides.
  - Encouraging businesses to develop and adopt travel plans.

## **Theme 5: Managing the impact of coaches and long distance buses.**

### **(i) Aim**

To positively manage coach and long distance bus access into Stratford-upon-Avon to minimise the impact these vehicles have on the town centre and to provide an appropriate level of service for operators and passengers.

### **(ii) Context**

Although tourism within Stratford-upon-Avon brings major economic benefits, it also causes environmental problems. One source of these is the large number of coaches that use unsuitable roads, particularly in the historic town centre, Old Town and through Shottery. Removing as many of these vehicles as possible and reducing the amount of time those that need to be in the town centre stop on the roadside will improve traffic flows and the pedestrian experience and improve air quality.

Providing appropriate facilities for coach operators is essential to ensure operators continue to bring visitors to Stratford-upon-Avon and that those visitors find this transport mode attractive. A coach park has operated off Bridgeway for many years with a visitor reception area in the adjacent Leisure Centre complex. It has plenty of space and is relatively accessible to coaches, but is too far from many of the town attractions for visitors, particularly those who are less mobile, to comfortably reach on foot.

There is limited commercial coach travel to Stratford-upon-Avon, with National Express operating three services a day from London. These services stop at the coach park off Bridgeway.

A bus/rail interchange outside Stratford railway station, incorporating a bus lay-over facility, is provided as part of the redevelopment of the former Cattle Market site.

### **(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy**

- Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in Stratford town centre.
- Reduce the negative impact of traffic on air quality.
- Protect the historic core of Stratford Town and support the visitor economy.

**(iv) Policies**

**Policy 6** The County Council and District Council will apply an integrated approach to managing the way in which buses and coaches access the town centre and other sensitive parts of the town. This will focus on achieving an appropriate balance between the needs of operators and passengers and improving the quality of the local environment.

Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. Restrict coach access to the town centre and other unsuitable routes within Stratford-upon-Avon.
2. Review current coach parking facilities at the Leisure centre and develop appropriate facilities for all coach drop off, collection and layover. Provide a shuttle bus between the coach park, town centre and railway station.
3. A new access to Anne Hathaway's Cottage from the West of Shottery Relief Road will be provided as an alternative to the narrow and unsuitable residential roads in the west of Stratford-upon-Avon and Shottery.

## Theme 6: Managing the impact of HGVs

### (i) Aim

To develop Lorry Routing Strategies to manage/reduce Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) flows travelling through Stratford-upon-Avon whilst maintaining local access.

### (ii) Context

#### **Stratford-upon-Avon**

Freight access to town centres is essential to provide the goods and services for local businesses and consumers. However, the highly competitive nature of the road freight transport sector has often led to the use of larger vehicles in an attempt to increase efficiency. The presence of these vehicles in the historic town centre and on the narrow Clopton Bridge is particularly intimidating to pedestrians and cyclists, and has had a detrimental effect on the local environment, including air quality.

#### **Clopton Bridge**

Clopton Bridge has been structurally assessed as able to carry the HGVs using it. A 12 hour (07.00 to 19.00) survey was undertaken in June 2007 to identify the origins and destinations (ODs) of HGVs crossing Clopton Bridge. The total volume of HGVs crossing Clopton Bridge in that survey was 789 which is consistent with other survey data taken at this location. The survey showed:

- (a) More than half of the HGV traffic using the bridge had an origin or destination within Stratford town itself which is likely to reflect the need for lorries to make local deliveries;
- (b) The dominant through HGV traffic movement on Clopton Bridge was travelling between the A439 and the B4632 and vice versa, which is likely to reflect the importance of commercial activity at Long Marston Depot.

The County Council has previously considered introducing a weight limit on Clopton Bridge, however analysis showed that this would increase HGV traffic on already congested routes and increase the environmental impact of HGVs on Stratford town centre. The County Council Cabinet therefore resolved in June 2013 to leave the bridge unrestricted.

The proposed West of Shottery Relief Road and South Western Relief Road, which in combination form a complete bypass to the west of the town, could divert some through HGV traffic away from Clopton Bridge and the town centre. Provision of an Eastern Relief Road (ERR) could provide a shorter, quicker and more direct alternative route for HGVs travelling between the south of Stratford and the M40 at Junction 15. An ERR would also enable

consideration of restricting access to Clopton Bridge as part of a wider strategy for managing traffic flows in the town as set out in Key Theme 1.

**(iii) Objectives relevant to this policy**

- Reduce through trips for motorised traffic in Stratford town centre.
- Reduce negative impact of traffic on air quality.
- Protect the historic core of Stratford town and support the visitor economy.
- Provide increased resilience to the transport network.
- Improve road safety for all users.
- Accommodate future development without compromising the above objectives.

**(iv) Policies**

<p><b>Policy 7</b> The County Council, District Council and other agencies will work together to develop Lorry Routing Strategies to manage and/or reduce Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) flows through Stratford-upon-Avon and other sensitive locations across the District, whilst maintaining local access.</p>
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Measures that support the delivery of this policy include:

1. The provision of Western and Eastern Relief Roads to reduce the need for HGV through traffic to access central areas of Stratford-upon-Avon.
2. Impose restrictions on HGV access over Clopton Bridge (requires delivery of an eastern relief road).
3. Impose weight restrictions to limit goods vehicle access to the town centre.
4. Establish HGV routing agreements with local freight operators and developers to minimise environmental impacts whilst seeking to maintain efficient access.
5. Promote increased usage of dedicated commercial vehicle Satellite Navigation units by freight operators with neighbouring local authorities, local MPs and other agencies.
6. Manage access to industrial areas in a way which is consistent with the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 Sustainable Freight Distribution Strategy.