

# Stratford-upon-Avon's Neighbourhood Plan

## Notes on the town's transport system

This section has been written and reviewed by Stratford's Transport & Parking Group<sup>1</sup>. It is not exhaustive and covers: (i) parking in the town; (ii) resident's parking; (iii) upgrading the town's railway stations; (iv) proposed re-instatement of the Honeybourne rail link; (v) improving town centre streets and signage; (vi) managing out-of-town coaches driving through the town centre; (vii) discouraging HGVs from using the town centre; (viii) improving the signage of pedestrian routes in the town; (ix) blue badge parking; (x) operation of Shopmobility; (xi) potential for providing a new bus station and southern P&R facility; (xii) improving the local road network; and (xiii) replacing Lucy's Mill Foot Bridge<sup>2</sup>. A final section presents a Summary of Conclusions and a list of Projects with the Highest Priority.

### 1. *Parking in the Town*

The Group's approach to this issue was guided by four main principles:

- Parking spaces are a scarce resource so that their role (on-street, off-street and Park & Ride) should be clear and supported by the tariff structure, naming of car parks, on-street signage and SDC's web page.
- The tariff structure should be reasonably in line with private car parks in the town and the town's main competitors (e.g., Leamington, Warwick, Touchwood at Solihull, etc.).
- Changes to the tariff structure should attempt to be revenue neutral.
- Car parking provided by SDC is a commercial service and all car parks in the District should aim to at least cover their costs.

The practical work on parking in Stratford-upon-Avon was guided by a major survey, carried out by Stratforward during 2010. It looked at commuter parking in the town, together with parking for residents and visitors using the town centre (mainly shoppers). The results of the survey were extensively discussed by a Working Group set up by SDC. After this discussion – informed by a car park model developed by a member of the Group – the Group prepared a document which made several recommendations.

The main ones included: (i) to avoid confusion, all car parks in the town, should have the same tariff; (ii) to encourage night time users to visit earlier and to park off-street, rather than on-street (particularly in Residents Parking zones), the evening charge in all car parks should be lowered and commence earlier (e.g., at 4 or 5pm); (iii) to encourage visitors to spend longer in the town, a lower 8-hour rate should be introduced; (iv) to encourage longer over-night stays, the 24-hour rate should be

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<sup>1</sup> The Group was set up by the Stratford Society and Stratforward. *Members include: Ian Heggie (SS, Chairman), Chris Gregory (Stratforward, Vice Chairman), Cllr Jenny Fradgley (SS, Secretary), Neil Basnett (Chairman of Stratforward), Roger Bennett (WCC), Roger Davis (SS), Elizabeth Dixon (Accessible Stratford and SS), Cllr Keith Lloyd (STC and SDC), Martyn Luscombe (Stratford Voice), Cllr Kate Rolfe (SDC and WCC), Robin Sankey (SS), Pat Whitehouse (Retail) and Yvette Widdowfield (SDC).*

<sup>2</sup> The Group's work is reported on the Stratford Society's web page at [www.stratfordsociety.co.uk](http://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk).

lowered and a new 72-hour rate introduced ; (v) to encourage coaches to use the coach park and stay longer in the town, the coach parking tariff should be simplified; (vi) naming car parks consistently (e.g., where is Unicorn Meadow?) and branding them to ensure motorists can easily find one that suits their needs; and (vii) to ensure residents know they get 25% extra parking for any amount purchased via the Stratford Card (they pay £10.00 for a card worth £12.50), the Stratford Card should be actively promoted (SDC's 2011 survey showed that only 11% of respondents knew about the Stratford Card).

The only contentious recommendation related to the current 1-hour free parking in Bridgefoot and Unicorn Meadow. The Stratford survey showed that the ½ hour parking restriction in Bridge, Union and High Streets was no longer fit-for-purpose. Residents and visitors simply cannot complete their personal business in 30 minutes. As a result, WCC has arranged to convert the ½ hour into a 1-hour restriction which is currently being advertised. This undermines the value of the current 1-hour free parking in Bridgefoot and Unicorn Meadow (equivalent to 30-40 minutes free when you allow for the time taken to walk between the car park and the shops). This probably explains why SDC's 2011 Parking Survey showed that only 16% of respondents overall made use of the 1-hour free period. The Group therefore recommended that the free one hour period should be abolished and the extra revenue raised used to benefit residents in other ways (e.g., by promoting the Stratford Card, lowering the evening tariff to discourage parking in resident's parking zones, etc.).

The proposed new tariff structure – for all car parks in the town – was considered by SDC's Cabinet on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012. They generally accepted all the recommendations made by the Working Group. The new tariffs will apply to all car parks in the town, including the coach park at the Leisure Centre, and the changes to the tariff are broadly revenue neutral. However, the 1 and 2-hour rates have been rounded up to £2.00 and £3.00 respectively, the 1-hour free in Bridgefoot and Unicorn Meadow has been retained, the 8-hour rate will rise to £6.00, the 10-hour rate will fall to £8.00, while the 24-hour rate will fall to £10.00. This tariff is a great improvement on the previous one and compares well with other tariffs in the town and tariffs in competitor towns like Touchwood at Solihull, Leamington and Warwick.

	up to 20/30m	up to 1 hr	up to 2 hr	up to 3 hr	up to 4 hr	up to 6 hr	up to 8 hr	up to 12 hr	24 hr	evg only	72 hr
Existing	free	0.80	1.60	2.70	4.00	6.00	-	10.00	20.00	3.00	-
Proposed	0.10	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	-	6.00	8.00	10.00	2.00	20.00

Note: The existing 20 minutes free only applies to the Leisure Centre.

The aim is to have the new tariffs in place by Christmas 2012 and they will be widely publicised by SDC and Stratford. Other recommendations made by the Working Group, including re-naming some car parks, were also accepted and the SDC web site has been upgraded to show all car parks – both public and private – together with their charging regimes. Branding of car parks is also being considered to ensure motorists can easily find the best car park to use.

The Stratford survey also looked at Park & Ride. Prior to May 2012, the last shuttle bus left Bridge Street just after 7.0 pm (which meant leaving your place of work by 6.45 pm to catch the last bus) and the gate was locked at 7.30 pm, after

which a fine was payable to get your car released. It was therefore no surprise that only about 6% of commuters in the survey used P&R. However, those that did – staff who regularly finish work before about 6.30 pm -- found the service convenient and of high quality. Park & Ride could thus be made more attractive for commuters – particularly those who regularly work late, or cannot leave the office before 6.30 pm -- by extending the opening hours. WCC responded positively to Stratford's suggestions and, on 28 May 2012, the operating hours were extended from 7.0 pm to 11.30 pm.

Finally, there is the issue of fairness – are parking charges in Stratford-upon-Avon fair and equitable? SDC has 22 off-street car parks, ten of which are in Stratford. Only one of the 12 outside Stratford levies charges – a mere 20p for one hour and 40p for two hours, resulting in substantial losses. In Stratford, on the other hand, parking charges are high – typically 80p for one hour and £1.60 for 2 hours, which results in a profit of approximately £640,000 per year. The loss from off-street parking outside Stratford, on the other hand, is £270,000. Parking is not a social service and the least tax payers expect is that SDC car parks should cover their costs – either by levying a small charge, leasing the car park to the Parish Council at cost, or re-developing the site.

## **2. Resident's Parking**

In 2010, the Town Council also carried out an extensive survey of resident's parking in the town, which expressed serious concerns about on-street parking in the town's residential areas. It showed that 72% of resident's and 77% of visitors could not park easily in their parking zone, with most difficulty experienced during the early evening. Suggestions have been made that: (i) commuter parking in residential areas should be discouraged by extending current parking restrictions (e.g., by widening resident's parking zones); (ii) the hours when restrictions apply should be extended from 6.00 pm to 7.30pm, or later; (iii) reducing the time (currently 2 hours) when non-residents can park during the day; and (iv) reviewing whether second and third permits issued for the same address should cost more.

More controversially, many of those residents who regularly visit London, would like to see current visitor permits replaced by the scratch card system widely used by London boroughs. The system would discourage the current "black market" in visitor permits. The scratch cards could be trialled in a demonstration project and then potentially rolled out if residents voted in favour of the system.

WCC has responded to the above by agreeing to carry out a fundamental review of the residents parking scheme in the town. The review is currently ongoing.

## **3. Upgrading the Town's Railway Stations**

The Group worked jointly with the Town Council when reviewing the proposal to build a new Stratford Parkway station at Bishopton. The Group had several reservations about the proposals. Many were of a technical nature and related to the traffic forecasts, lack of recognition that many of the current passengers are students travelling on low-cost fares and there were concerns about the way the costs had been prepared. However, the Group's main concern was that an un-manned station

would not be DDA compliant (hence neither of the town's two stations would be able to properly accommodate passengers with disabilities) and that the Parkway station may result in the eventual closure of the existing town station. The Group likewise did not accept WCC's claim that additional car parking could not be provided at -- or close to -- the existing town station.

However, in December 2011, the government announced that the DfT had approved funding from its Access for All scheme (which aims to improve access to railway stations) for a new DDA compliant footbridge at Stratford town station which would meet the needs of all users. The scheme will cost around £1.23 million and the DfT will finance £1 million of this cost. The balance is expected to be raised from developer contributions (Section 106 payments). The Group welcomed this news. First, it means that at least one of the town's two stations will be user-friendly, (i.e., DDA compliant, although the town station still lacks an accessible toilet), while second it will make the town station more attractive to rail travellers and this, in turn, will make it more likely that the town station will remain open.

#### **4. *Proposed Reinstatement of the Honeybourne Rail Line***

A major study of this project was carried out in 1996 by consultants, Halcrow Fox. It was a low-cost scheme (capital cost about £10 million), involving a level crossing at the Evesham Road roundabout, a new track fitted alongside the first section of Seven Meadows Road (now complicated by the construction of Wetherby Way), followed by a rail track flanked by weldmesh security fencing running along the Greenway. However, in spite of being low cost, the scheme was expected to incur an annual operating deficit of over £500,000.

An organisation called the Rail Transport Group produced another report in 2007 arguing for re-instatement of the Honeybourne link, but presented little hard evidence to support the scheme. A year later, John Deegan (WCC's former Head of Strategy & Economic Development), proposed re-instatement of the Honeybourne link using a low emission tram/train system. The vehicle would operate as a train along the re-instated rail right-of-way along the Greenway but, once it reached the Greenway car park, would operate like a regular bus along the public highway to Stratford station. Such vehicles are common in Germany and a pilot tram/train is currently being implemented between Sheffield and Rotherham.

The Shakespeare Line Promotion Group have recently put forward a new proposal for consideration by WCC. This differs somewhat from the Halcrow Fox proposal, in that they suggest re-instating the old rail line in a cutting and taking it under both Evesham Road roundabout and Wetherby Way in a tunnel. Capital costs are roughly estimated at £20-30 million, but no figures are presented for operating costs and hence the required annual subsidy. The Group were therefore concerned that the scheme would be significantly less economically viable than the Halcrow Fox scheme, while the dive-under bridges and cuttings would create serious technical problems in the vicinity of Sanctus Road bridge.

A more recent review carried out by Arup's has confirmed that the above dive-under solution would cost roughly £76 million (£96.9 million when "optimism bias" is included) and that Option 1 (hourly Leamington to Worcester service, plus hourly

Stratford to Oxford service) would make a loss in the first year of operation (2019/20) of £1.9 million, while Option 2 (hourly Stratford to Worcester service, plus hourly Stratford to Oxford service) would make a loss of £1.3 million. The subsidy reduces over time, provided traffic continues to grow and fares continue to rise. The consultants benefit/cost analysis is more optimistic, although it only shows a positive B/C ratio under a high demand growth scenario (6% per year). The project, in its present form, is not financially viable -- it requires an initial investment of £76 million, plus a substantial annual subsidy -- and is unlikely to attract any government grant.

In spite of the above reservations, the Group nevertheless suggests that WCC should not automatically dismiss such proposals, but should remain open minded about the possibility of eventually reinstating the rail link (perhaps using a low-emission tram/train system). However, no scheme should be implemented unless it can demonstrate a positive business case and can be shown not to cause significant impact on residents living close to the route. Without that, no government grants would be available to finance capital costs and the required annual subsidy.

## **5. *Town Centre Streets and Signage***

Some of Stratford's streets are cluttered with signs and lines and are congested by both traffic and delivery vehicles. Although the town has an attractive heritage – particularly along the Historic Spine – it does not offer residents and visitors an attractive pedestrian environment in which to enjoy this heritage. Stratford is one of the few historic towns that still allow commercial vehicles to pick up and deliver all day long.

The Group worked alongside the Historic Spine Working Group to undertake a survey of road signs and lines along the Spine. The survey was carried out by members of the Stratford Society in August 2011. The results were written up as a report, commenting in general about yellow lines, followed by 24 comments about signs (or groups of signs) which might hopefully be removed or reduced in size in Henley Street, High Street, Chapel Street, Church Street and Old Town (a copy of the report on the survey is posted on the Society's web page). Members of the Society then walked the Spine with one of WCC's highways staff and agreed that many of the signs could be removed, or reduced in size. Some have already been removed under WCC's maintenance budget and the Society has been assured that the remainder will be dealt with over the next 2-3 years. WCC has also agreed a special signage policy for the Spine – all new and replacement signs will be at the minimum size specified in the regulations, unless there are good reasons for not using the minimum.

The Group has also looked at pick-up and delivery restrictions in the town centre (or lack of them). Such restrictions should ideally follow the lead set by other historic market towns where commercial vehicles cannot pick-up and deliver goods to town centre premises between 10.30 am and 4.00 pm. WCC is mindful of this concern and is about to advertise parking and loading restrictions in High Street which – if approved – will be introduced in early 2013. If this proves successful, wider restrictions could eventually be introduced across the entire town centre.

Another strategy to slow down traffic and encourage drivers to find alternative less

intrusive routes, might be to introduce a 20 mph speed restriction throughout the town centre. This would simply be a speed restriction, not a 20 mph zone which requires physical measures to slow down traffic. This strategy has been applied in Oxford with some success. A study tour to Oxford, to learn from their experience, may be a useful first step towards introducing a similar speed restriction in Stratford.

Finally, the Group would like to see a pilot project introduced in Windsor Street to test out the concept of shared space (civilised streets). The Waterside and Southern Lane scheme is working well and the time has now come to test out the concept in a street where a large number of coach passengers currently have to cross a busy road, often in large groups. Turning the street into a shared space scheme would slow down traffic and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Guide Dogs for the Blind joined us in our deliberations and we agreed to work jointly with them to try and create a civilised street. In the context of the current financial crisis, progress would be slow, although many of the initial steps are low cost and could be introduced incrementally as funds became available.

## **6. *Managing Out-of-Town Coaches Driving Through the Town Centre***

A visitor attraction like Stratford-upon-Avon is understandably a major destination for out-of-town coach tours. Residents and town centre businesses clearly recognise that there are many *bona fide* busses and coaches that need to travel through the town centre – City Sightseeing and the coaches that pick up and drop off at the Falcon and Shakespeare Hotels. However, there is widespread belief that many of the other out-of-town coaches simply make a drive-through visit without passengers getting off the coach. They visit Holy Trinity Church, spend 10-15 minutes there, and then drive very slowly along Church Street, Chapel Street and High Street while an on-board tour guide with a microphone points out the various visitor attractions in the town. In other words, the out-of-town coaches are seen to impose serious environmental costs on the town in return for very little benefit.

This is an over-simplification. The coaches almost invariably follow a route that takes in several towns and several of Stratford's visitor attractions. The coach tours typically start and finish at the Birthplace coach park in Windsor Street, although some start from Anne Hathaway's Cottage. At their first stop – usually the Birthplace coach park – they pick up a local Stratford-based guide to show them around the town. Indeed, last year, Rita Mansfield Associates (a local travel business) supplied 220 guides to the five largest tour operators and about 100 guides to the smaller operators. They typically visit the Birthplace and then drive through the town centre via High Street, Sheep Street, past the Theatre and on to Holy Trinity Church. After that, they visit Anne Hathaway's Cottage and then return to the town and travel along Church Street, Chapel Street and High Street to view the Grammar School, Alms Houses, Nash's House, Harvard House and Judith Shakespeare's House. They then cross the roundabout, go down Windsor Street and along Guild Street to get back to the Windsor Street coach park to complete their circular tour. The coach passengers spend some time in the town where they often have lunch (mainly at Marlowe's, but sometimes at The Falcon) and also spend a short time visiting local shops. They re-join the coach in Windsor Street and continue their journey on to the M40.

Most of the adverse impacts caused by coaches could be avoided if the town had a central bus/coach station with good access roads. The Leisure Centre coach park is too far away to serve this purpose. Elderly visitors cannot realistically be expected to walk all the way from the coach park to Holy Trinity Church and back again, while school parties are put off by the prospect of having to manage school children over such long distances. The recent WCC study into a possible town centre bus station furthermore did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of visiting coaches. The proposed central coach/bus station probably needs to be re-visited in relation to the management of coaches in the town centre.

The coaches, though irritating to residents and some businesses in the town, do make a positive contribution to the town's visitor economy. One of the major irritations occurs in High Street where a combination of delivery vehicles, coaches and other traffic creates an unpleasant pedestrian environment. High Street businesses are acutely aware of this and blame it for discouraging shoppers from visiting the street. Given this concern, positive steps need to be taken to discourage coaches from using High Street and other sensitive town centre streets. On the route from the Windsor Street coach park to Holy Trinity Church, coaches do not *have* to use High Street. They could travel via the gyratory to Waterside, thereby avoiding High Street. On the return trip via Church Street, it is more difficult to avoid using High Street, other than by going down Sheep Street, back along Waterside/Southern Lane and then on to the Windsor Street coach park via Grove Road and Arden Street (both heavily congested).

The only immediate solution is for WCC to identify a series of coach routes through the town – together with suitable drop off/pick up points (e.g., in Church Street, behind Marks & Spencer, etc.) -- to serve the needs of coach operators visiting the Birthplace, Holy Trinity Church, Anne Hathaway's Cottage and other visitor attractions in the town. Some road improvements might be required to enable double wheelbase coaches to turn into some of the designated routes (e.g., Chapel Lane) and it may be worth considering reversing the one-way system in the lower section of Windsor Street to enable coaches returning to the Windsor Street coach park to get there via Rother Street. The routes might then be issued to coach operators as an Advisory Notice to discourage use of High Street and other sensitive town centre streets when visiting the town.

The overall conclusion is that coach routes through the town centre need to be more carefully managed. In the short term, WCC needs to issue an Advisory Notice to coach operators identifying suitable coach routes through the town – together with designated drop off/pick up points -- to minimise environmental impacts. The Advisory Notice needs to be positively disseminated to coach operators via the Coach Tour Operators Association, the Guild of Registered Tourist Guides and SDC's Destination Steering Group. The impact of the Advisory Notice needs to be monitored to see how effective it is.

In the longer term, if coaches continue to increase in size, WCC may have to ban coaches from using town centre streets. The size of coaches therefore also needs to be monitored to inform future long term strategy on this issue.

## **7. Discouraging HGVs Driving Through the Town Centre**

The town is also adversely affected by the growing number of large, multi-axle HGVs travelling through the town centre. The narrow streets and small roundabouts cannot properly accommodate them and – as well as being a road safety hazard -- they regularly mount the kerbs and damage the pavements. Initial discussions with WCC have not come up with any solutions, since all the easy options – like banning HGVs over a certain weight – are either illegal or unenforceable. However, more work needs to be done to try and find a feasible and effective solution.

## **8. *Improving Pedestrian Signage***

Pedestrian signage in the town was significantly improved under the Wayfinding Study commissioned by the Stratford Renaissance Project in 2005. The town now has a fresh set of standard sign posts erected throughout the town centre. The signs are furthermore supported by an Official Walking Guide produced at the same time.

However, there are some important routes that probably need supplementary signage to make them more user-friendly. One is the pedestrian link between the railway station and the Maybird Centre; the other is the Historic Spine running from the Birthplace to Holy Trinity Church. More effort needs to be made to facilitate easy pedestrian movement along such routes.

## **9. *Blue-Badge Parking***

Blue-Badge users have to pay to park in Stratford's privately-owned car parks, while parking on-street and in SDC car parks is free. As a general rule, use of on-street Blue Badge Holder Only bays needs to be restricted to a maximum stay of 3 hours during the working day to ensure regular turnover. As far as possible, individual bays need to be marked out so that they assist users who need wider door entry, or rear access to their vehicles.

## **10 *Operation of Shopmobility***

Shopmobility is a service that helps people who have mobility problems (whether through disability, illness or injury) to continue to get around town centers independently. In Stratford-upon-Avon, it is a free service which provides powered scooters and wheelchairs for hire to enable visitors to make the most of their time in the town. The existing service is primarily funded by SDC, using equipment bought by the Friends of Shopmobility. It was initially located in the town centre, but outgrew its location which was also required for another use. The service was therefore moved to the Bridgefoot Car Park. Although this location provides disabled parking spaces and is under cover, it is really too far away from the town centre. A better – indeed an ideal location -- would be the ground floor of the NCP car park adjoining Town Square. An expression of interest about this facility was given by the owners of Town Square when they obtained planning permission to re-design the Square. This should be actively pursued to try and place Shopmobility closer to the places disabled shoppers wish to visit.

## **11. *Providing a new Bus Station and Southern P&R Facility***



Several members of the Group were on the Steering Committees for these feasibility studies. The reports were presented in July and neither produced an economic business case to support the schemes. They could therefore only be implemented by using Section 106 funds. The Group reviewed the feasibility studies and accepted the Steering Groups' conclusions. The viability of the proposed Southern P&R facility, should nevertheless be reviewed again once the new Waitrose P&R service has been operating for 12 months. Initial usage of the facility has so far been disappointing and may be related to the fact that it only operates from Monday to Saturday and the last shuttle bus leaves Bridge Street at 6.40 pm.

Since bus congestion in Bridge and Wood Streets is an ongoing concern -- and even if a bus station was built it would be several years before it opened -- the Group contacted Stagecoach and Johnsons to discuss what might be done in the immediate future to alleviate the present situation. The bus companies responded positively and indicated that they might be able to use the Leisure Centre car park for layovers. The potential use of the Leisure Centre was raised with SDC and it was agreed in principle that this could be done, although busses laying over would probably have to pay a fee. However, since the coach tariff is being reduced to £1.00 for 1-hour and SDC have shown willingness to introduce a possible "layover tariff", we are optimistic that agreement will soon be reached.

## **12. *Improving the Local Road Network***

The main concern under this heading, is the large volume of HGVs that travel through the town and – of particular concern – travel over Clopton Bridge. The bridge traffic is a major blot on the landscape in one of the country's finest historic market towns. Many people in the town would therefore like to see a weight limit imposed on Clopton Bridge to "force" HGVs to find alternative routes. However, without some form of bypass, the heavy vehicles – particularly those travelling between the M40 and Long Marston -- may continue to use roads in and around the town. For example, although the weight restriction on Clopton Bridge may force HGVs to use the A429 Barford bypass, they might then use the B4086 through Tiddington, or the A422 Banbury Road, to get to Long Marston.

In this context, a number of people have suggested constructing a bypass – either on the Northern side of the town with a new river crossing near Oxstalls Farm on Warwick Road, or to the South of the town by way of a Shottery bypass, linking the A46 to Seven Meadows road. However, neither route is likely to be economically viable and both would therefore have to rely on some Section 106 funding. This would inevitably lead to further large scale house building on the edge of the town. Such a strategy is highly unpopular in the town, because of the adverse effect that large scale housing developments have on the character of the town. Hence, no bypass would be politically feasible unless the local authorities could guarantee no associated housing developments would take place.

In terms of overall investment priorities, a significant reduction in the number of HGVs using Clopton Bridge probably has the highest overall priority. However, it is not clear how this could be achieved without simply transferring the HGV problem to other parts of the local road network. The issue is nevertheless of such importance

that further studies should be carried out to establish what, if anything, can be done to reduce the number of HGVs using Clopton Bridge.

### **13. *Replacing Lucy's Mill Bridge***

Stratford Voice have developed a proposal to replace Lucy's Mill Foot Bridge with an alternative that would be fully DDA compliant. Previous WCC feasibility studies had ruled out a replacement bridge on the grounds that it could not be built within land currently owned (or controlled) by WCC. Private land would have to be compulsorily purchased and the owners of the land had indicated that they would strongly oppose compulsory purchase proceedings. WCC therefore decided to shelve the project.

Since then, Stratford Voice have done a great deal of work on the project. Briefly, they: (i) carried out a survey of bridge users to test support for a replacement bridge (over 95% of respondents were in favour); (ii) assembled photos of potentially dangerous incidents that occurred because of the existing structure; (iii) established details of land ownership related to potential replacement of the bridge; (iv) met with representatives of potentially affected Resident's Groups to seek their views and concerns regarding a replacement bridge; (v) consulted the Environmental Agency to obtain outline details of their requirements regarding the construction of a new bridge; and (vi) met with WCC and Sustrans bridge engineers on site. All this work suggested that it was technically possible to construct a new DDA compliant bridge in its present location without encroaching on private property.

Stratford voice have now prepared terms of reference for a detailed feasibility study of the project and are currently fund raising to cover the cost of the study. The Transport & Parking Group has supported Stratford Voice in the above work and think that, if the feasibility study shows that a replacement bridge is feasible without encroaching on private property, the scheme should have high priority.

### **14. *Summary of Conclusions***

(i) Parking in the town. The new tariff structure approved by the SDC Cabinet should be implemented as soon as possible -- ideally before Christmas 2012 -- as should the change in car park names and signage. In the longer term, car parks should also be branded to signify their main usage (e.g., Theatre Quarter, Riverside, etc.). Finally, all car parks in the District should attempt at least to cover their costs.

(ii) Residents parking. The ongoing WCC study should be completed as soon as possible. As part of the study, consideration should be given to wider resident's parking zones, extending the times when restrictions apply, reducing the time non-residents can park in controlled zones, increasing the costs of second and third resident's permits issued for the same address and trialling a scratch card system for visitor permits.

(iii) Upgrading the town's railway stations. The DDA compliant footbridge due to be installed at Stratford station should be implemented as soon as possible and, once Stratford Parkway is operating, every effort should be made to keep the town station open. The town station's toilets should also be made DDA compliant.

- (iv) Proposed reinstatement of the Honeybourne rail line. The line should only be reinstated if it can show a positive business case that would qualify for government grant support and would not require more than a token annual operating subsidy from local rate payers via WCC.
- (v) Improving town centre streets and signage. Efforts should continue to reduce traffic signs and lines in the town centre and introduce restrictions on commercial pick-ups and deliveries in the town centre. A 20 mph speed restriction should be considered for the whole of the town centre. In parallel with that, a shared space (civilised streets) trial should be implemented in Windsor Street to test the concept of shared space and its relevance to Stratford.
- (vi) Managing out-of-town coaches driving through the town centre. In the short term, WCC needs to issue an Advisory Notice to coach operators identifying suitable coach routes through the town – together with designated drop off/pick up points -- to minimise environmental impacts. The Advice should be widely disseminated to coach operators and the impact of the Notice needs to be monitored to see how effective it is. In the longer term, if coaches continue to increase in size, WCC may have to ban coaches from using town centre streets. The size of coaches therefore also needs to be monitored to inform future long term strategy on this issue
- (vii) Discouraging HGVs from using the town centre. More work needs to be done on this topic to try and find feasible and effective ways of discouraging HGVs from driving through the town centre.
- (viii) Improving the signage of pedestrian routes. More effort needs to be made to provide suitable signage to facilitate pedestrian movements along routes like the one between the railway station and the Maybird Centre and along the town's Historic Spine running from the Birthplace to Holy Trinity Church.
- (ix) Blue badge parking provision. The town's blue badge parking arrangements have improved during the past year. Although on-street bays are of different sizes, there has been a gradual improvement towards the Department of Transport recommendations to assist users who need wider door entry, or rear access to their vehicles. This should continue.
- (x) Operation of Shopmobility. The current service operates from the Bridgefoot Car Park, which provides disabled parking spaces and is under cover. However, it is too far away from the town centre. A better – indeed an ideal location -- would be the ground floor of the NCP car park adjoining Town Square. This option should be pursued with the owners of Town Square to try and place Shopmobility closer to the places disabled shoppers wish to visit.
- (xi) Potential for providing a new Bus Station and Southern P&R Facility. Neither of these projects has been able to produce a positive business case and cannot be supported at this time. However, the feasibility of the Southern P&R should be re-visited once the new Waitrose service has been operating for 12 months. In the meantime, the Transport & Parking Group – with SDC support – is close to agreeing arrangements on use of the Leisure Centre coach park for bus layovers.

(xii) Improving the local road network. In terms of overall investment priorities, a significant reduction in the number of HGVs using Clopton Bridge probably has the highest overall priority. However, it is not clear how this could be achieved without simply transferring the HGV problem to other parts of the local road network. The issue is nevertheless of such importance that further studies should be carried out to establish what, if anything, can be done to reduce these vehicles.

(xiii) Replacing Lucy's Mill Foot Bridge. The ongoing efforts to replace this bridge with one that is DDA compliant should be encouraged and supported.

### **15. *Projects with the Highest Priority***

The recommended changes to the current parking tariff are likely to be implemented before the end of 2012 and blue badge provision has improved markedly during the past year. Other than that, our highest priorities are as follows:

- (i) Reducing the number of HGVs using Clopton Bridge is our highest priority.
- (ii) Better managing coaches driving through the town by identifying designated coach routes, together with designated drop off/pick up points, is our second highest priority.
- (iii) Reducing the number of busses laying over in Bridge and Wood Streets is our third highest priority.
- (iv) Supporting efforts to upgrade Lucy's Mill Bridge is the next priority.
- (v) Improving Residents Parking arrangements is the next priority.
- (vi) Working to re-locate Shopmobility from Bridgefoot to the NCP car park adjoining Town Square is our next priority.