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**Stratford Society/Business Improvement District
Transport & Parking Group
Comments on LTP3 Draft Plan (2011-2026)**

The following comments on the Consultation Document are being submitted by Stratford's Transport & Parking Group. The Group is led by the Stratford Society (with 300 paid up members) and the Stratford Business Improvement District (with 462 members). Other members include Accessible Stratford, a representative of the town's retailers, the Town Council, Stratford Voice and representatives of WCC and SDC.

Our comments relate mainly to the Stratford Transport Strategy, Sections 7.5.15 to 7.5.51, and are followed by some comments from our Chairman on selected Mode and Topic Strategies.

7.5.15 General Introduction

We have no comments on this.

7.5.16 Review

We agree with the WCC Reference Group that the seven bulleted transport problems listed in the consultation document need to be addressed to make the town centre a more pleasant place in which to live, work and visit.

7.5.17 Transport improvements to deliver growth

- (i) We question the wording of this section. Transport is a derived demand, so that transport improvements merely facilitate economic development or prevent transport constraints from suppressing it.
- (ii) We believe that all new developments (whether housing or otherwise) should be carefully designed to mitigate the potentially adverse transport impacts that typically arise.

7.5.18 Congestion Management

- (i) We support the proposed options (second set of bullets on p. 86), but believe they should also include management of bus layovers and commercial pick-up and delivery arrangements to help reduce road congestion.

- (ii) Likewise, coach parking should be restricted to designated areas to avoid adding to congestion.

7.5.19 Air Quality

We would like to see this section refer to the successful electric mini-tram demonstration project conducted in the town some years ago. We would like to see some follow up on the potential use of low emissions vehicles and would support lobbying central government to change the rules of the Transport Innovation Fund (if it survives the planned budget cuts) to support a wider range of transport innovations without tying them to the compulsory introduction of congestion charging.

7.5.21 Bus public transport

We support the concept of Quality Bus Corridors, provided they do not result in wholesale widening of roads in built up areas. However, some limited stretches of road, e.g., part of Birmingham Road, may justify widening without causing serious adverse impacts.

7.5.22 Stratford Bus/Rail Interchange

There are two issues here: (i) bus layovers (changing drivers, waiting to get back on schedule, using toilets, etc.); and (ii) providing shelter for passengers during inclement weather. The layovers could be accommodated on the Cattle market site, although we have been advised that the Leisure Centre would better suit current bus company schedules. Providing shelter for passengers waiting at the top of Wood Street, or the bottom of Bridge Street, is more difficult. Our gut feeling on this is that WCC, in consultation with the bus operators, needs to carry out a comprehensive review of bus routing in the town to explore whether a bus shelter in Rother Street (or NatWest Bank Square) could be linked into the P&R routes and include a Cattle Market stop where the buses could then layover.

7.5.23 Public Transport Information

We support the provision of better service information, but believe it should not be confined to the bus/rail interchange at the Cattle Market and the proposed Stratford Parkway station. It should be available in the town centre at places like Rother Square and NatWest Bank Square. The service information should furthermore be checked and updated on a regular basis.

7.5.25 Stratford Parkway

- (i) There is little support for this project in the town. The project was discussed with WCC officers at a meeting at the Town Hall and the outcome was summarised in a recent Stratford Society Newsletter (attached to this note as Annex 1). We support the views expressed in the Newsletter.
- (ii) The new Parkway does not generate many new passengers, apart from those diverted from Stratford by the implausible parking constraint, the 2-minute time saving, the 2-minute penalty the new station imposes on existing station users, the impact of the new investment (assumed to be equivalent to a 5% fare reduction which would take place anyway if the existing station was refurbished) and strategic P&R users. To put the patronage figures in context, Tables 4.8 and 4.9 in the consultants' report show that strategic

- P&R would only generate 4 additional originating passengers per day at the Parkway station when compared to a refurbished town station.
- (iii) We would like to see the consultants produce an analysis of the benefit-cost of improving Stratford station versus building a new Parkway station 1 mile down the track.

7.5.26 Stratford-upon-Avon Rail Station improvement

We are not impressed by the work currently being carried out at the station – it does not emphasise and build on the station's Victorian heritage. We believe that a well designed refurbishment could turn the station into a tourist attraction in its own right. We are also dismayed that the station is not DDA compliant.

7.5.27 Reopening the Stratford-Honeybourne line

We understand that a new consultant report has been prepared on the feasibility of re-opening this line and would like to study the report before offering any comments on it. However, we understand that the consultant's report presents new evidence that calls for a more open-minded approach to this project.

7.5.28 Community Transport

We support the provision of suitable community transport services, provided they are delivered in a cost-effective manner (e.g., a 23-seater mini-bus is not used to carry 3 passengers who could be carried more economically by taxi).

7.5.29 Taxis and Private Hire vehicles

We support this section, but would like to see more encouragement offered to encourage use of low emission vehicles.

7.5.30 Walking

- (i) We would like to see walking encouraged through better maintenance of footways and better lighting.
- (ii) We are strongly in favour of launching a small-scale demonstration project to illustrate the advantages of civilised streets (shared space) as a way of promoting walking by giving pedestrians greater priority in town centres. In our view, the ideal site for such a demonstration project is Windsor Street. We have developed a number of ideas on this and would value the opportunity to share them with WCC elected members and officers.

7.5.31 Waterside and Southern Lane Enhancement Scheme

We support the attempts being made to improve the walking environment along Waterside/ Southern Lane, but have concerns about the current state of the Waterside/Bridge Street junction and some of the other details of the scheme. We intend to await the final completion of the site works before reaching a final judgement on the enhancement scheme.

7.5.32 Walkable Core

We support the general principles underlying the above project, but believe that the Historic Spine element should be separated from the project and

implemented as soon as possible. Among other things, the Spine would act as a demonstration project to illustrate practical ways of improving the pedestrian environment in the town centre. We feel strongly that implementation of the Spine should start immediately and focus initially on the low cost elements of the scheme – e.g., pick-up/delivery restrictions – leaving the more costly traffic management interventions until later when the required funds are more likely to be available.

7.5.33 Accessibility Improvements

We support these suggestions, but do not think they should be listed under a separate heading. The principles outlined here should form part of all transport interventions. If this section is kept under a separate heading, we believe it should give more priority to improved road crossings.

7.5.34 Lucy's Mill Bridge

We believe that WCC should immediately try to make the above bridge more accessible and should discuss this issue with Elizabeth Dixon (Accessible Stratford). In the longer term, but before 2026, we believe that the bridge needs to be replaced. At that time all possible options for replacing the bridge should be explored, making use of a skilled footbridge designer who should be able to find an acceptable way of creating a DDA compliant footbridge without having to compulsorily purchase any nearby property.

7.5.35 Cycling

We support WCC's efforts to improve facilities for cycling. However, it is not easy to make cycling safe in a town like Stratford. Further progress probably requires more dialogue between WCC and user groups to try and find safe and acceptable ways of improving cycling facilities.

7.5.36 Safer Routes to Schools

This section could go further. A couple of years ago, the zig-zag yellow lines outside Stratford Primary School were made mandatory to improve road safety (the previous unenforceable lines had nearly led to several serious accidents). We believe that the experience since the lines were made mandatory should now be evaluated and, if positive, might then be considered for other primary schools.

7.5.37 Improvements for People with a Mobility Impairment

- (i) This section should be part of the Accessibility heading (7.5.33, if retained). It should furthermore be expanded to cover all forms of disability, not simply mobility impairments. People with a visual or hearing impairment require just as much attention as those with mobility impairments.
- (ii) Shopmobility, which is part of SDC and the Federation of Shopmobility, provides an important service for local residents and visitors who have mobility impairments (see 7.5.33 above). Its present location, at the Bridgefoot car park, is not ideal and a more central location would be of benefit to all users

7.5.38 Powered Two Wheelers

No comment.

7.5.40 Parking Policy

- (i) We agree that WCC and SDC should work together to promote P&R for commuters and long stay visitors. In this connection, we support the approach summarised in a recent Stratford Society Newsletter (see Annex 2).
- (ii) We believe this section should also address the issue of Resident's Parking. Although the issue is currently being examined through the ongoing Town Council parking survey, we feel that households are permitted to have too many permits at a nominal cost of £25 (the second and third permit should at least cost more), while serious consideration should be given to replacing the current Visitor's Permits with a scratch card system, perhaps costing £2-3 per 5-hour period.

7.5.41 Provision of a Second Park and Ride

The provision of a second P&R site is dependent on encouraging more use of P&R (see our comments under section 7.5.40).

7.5.42 Strategic Park and Ride

Based on the information provided, we question the wisdom of this site and cannot see how it fits in with Warwick Parkway and the proposed Stratford Parkway stations. In the present financial climate, we do not support this scheme.

7.5.43 Freight

- (i) We do not believe WCC should be investigating "possible restrictions on the timing of access by delivery vehicles, etc.". Instead, it should be introducing pick-up/delivery restrictions in the town centre as soon as possible. Before it ceased operations, the Town Management Partnership's Retail Group stated that they accepted the need for such restrictions and merely wanted to be consulted on the time periods when they would apply. These consultations can now be carried out through the BID Management Company.
- (ii) We believe this section should also refer to potential ways of restricting, or preventing HGV's using Clopton Bridge.

7.5.45 Stratford Leisure and Visitor Centre Link Road

No comment.

7.5.46 Coach Management

- (i) We believe that coach parking at the Leisure Centre must be made attractive to drivers who have some flexibility over their routes and destinations. WCC needs to consult the coach companies to find out what driver's look for at their discretionary stops – things like facilities for cleaning the vehicle, cheap food and refreshments, restrooms, etc.
- (ii) In the case of Holy Trinity Church, we feel that coaches should only stop for 5 minutes to load/unload passengers and should park at the Leisure Centre coach park while their passengers visit the church.

7.5.47 Stratford Western Relief Road

We support the provision of a new Western bypass PROVIDED: (i) it is not funded through Section 106 payments associated with the development of new housing at Shottery, but is justified using regular B/C analysis, including the environmental benefit of reducing HGV and other traffic using Clopton Bridge; (ii) the alignment is chosen to avoid traffic impacts on Anne Hathaway's Cottage; and (iii) the route is carried through to Seven Meadows Road to provide a full bypass to the town. We suggest that Arups be requested to prepare a quick evaluation of the feasibility of justifying the bypass using conventional B/C analysis, given the growing emphasis on environmental benefits and the need to develop tourism in historic market towns like Stratford.

7.5.48 Transport Corridor Protection

We support these suggestions.

7.5.50 Alcester to Stratford-upon-Avon

- (i) We strongly support improving the Alcester road. It is a dangerous road operating well outside its safe capacity.
- (ii) Although we do not oppose improvement of the A46 between Evesham and Ashchurch, it would bring more traffic closer to Stratford and positive steps should therefore be taken to discourage passing traffic from stopping off in the town.

7.5.51 M42 Active Traffic Management

We support this scheme.

STRATFORD PARKWAY

Are we being railroaded – or hoodwinked?

Serious reservations about the proposed Parkway station were expressed at a public meeting with County Council officers at the Town Hall on 2nd June. Those attending had the distinct feeling that we are being railroaded into the new Parkway when the £5 million could be better spent on upgrading the existing station.

Are these reservations just another example of the town resisting change? I don't think so. The town wants more and better train services and, if investment in a new station leads to more passengers and hence to higher revenues and better services, most people would be in favour. However, there is no evidence that investing in the Parkway would generate more passengers per £ spent.

To persuade critics – and there are many – that the proposal will be a benefit to the town, we need a better and more comprehensive feasibility study which looks at both stations with a more open mind. Both Chiltern and London-Midland were invited to the meeting. Neither showed up.

As a major regional visitor destination, Stratford does need better rail services and a more attractive station. Current services are poor, particularly in the evenings, and the station is run down and lacks basic facilities, particularly for disabled passengers. WCC's application for government funding to build a new station at Bishopton was intended to address these issues and focused on making the new station DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant.

Unfortunately, the proposed station will be unmanned and has no buildings – therefore no ticket office, no disabled toilets, no one on-site to deal with any malfunctions of the elevators. In addition, wheel chair users will have to rely on train staff deploying ramps to get them on and off the train (not all trains carry guards). How is this DDA compliant?

The Department of Transport's rail policy division were asked to advise on this and, although not committing themselves, their reply suggests that an unmanned station may not be DDA compliant. The rail operating companies must therefore be pressed to state clearly how they intend to deal with disabled passengers as there is no point in spending £5 million and having two stations which are not DDA compliant.

There are also major differences between the patronage figures used by WCC's consultants and those published by ORR, who base their figures on returns submitted by the rail operators. Nor is there any mention in the consultants' report that nearly 70% of current rail passengers at Stratford station are travelling on reduced fares – many of them are students attending Stratford High and Stratford College. Students do not behave like car-based commuters. This raises questions about the accuracy and credibility of the consultants' traffic forecasts.

A great deal of concern was expressed about the likely impact on the existing town

station. The consultant's figures speak for themselves. With the parkway in place, the town station will lose an estimated £250,000 per year in ticket sales. No one believes this will not have a major adverse impact on staffing levels at the station, maintenance standards and provision of other station facilities. WCC and the consultants have remained silent on this issue.

Finally, no one accepted the reasons put forward by WCC about car parking at the current station. The entire Cattle Market site is being re-developed and WCC could have asked SDC to prepare the development brief for the site to include proper parking provision at the station. They evidently did not do this and are now fighting a desperate rearguard action to avoid re-opening the issue.

Despite all this, the scheme is no longer a "proposal". It is going ahead – unless it becomes a casualty of the ongoing budget cuts – and is due to open in early 2012. Purchase of the required land is already under way.

Is this just another example of so-called consultation that results in nobody listening?

What's Wrong with Stratford's Park & Ride?

On a recent weekday, I counted barely 150 cars in Stratford's 750 space site. During a recent visit to Oxford, on the other hand, I found their P&R sites packed to capacity. Why the difference and can we learn anything from Oxford?

Three key factors have made Oxford a success.

- Good publicity. The made sure everyone saw the advantages of using P&R.
- Five sites on all the major routes into the city. No matter which direction you come from, you encounter a well sign-posted and easily accessible P&R site.
- Convenience. Most sites are open 24 hours per day, the shuttle bus operates from 6am until nearly midnight and cars can be parked overnight.

By contrast, this is the Stratford situation:

- No incentives. Stratford's Council website tells potential users that there are "over 2,800 spaces within Stratford-upon-Avon town centre" and "all the car parks are conveniently situated within 10 minutes walk for all amenities and shopping." What is that if not an invitation to ignore park & ride? The Oxford City Council web page immediately advises you to use P&R
- Our one Park & Ride means that visitors are coming from the south or east and have to cross town to park & ride. Of course they won't. The Society has long argued that two sites should have been in operation from the beginning and the larger expenditure would have been resulted in much greater visitor use.
- Inconvenience. Shuttle buses finish at 7pm and the gates close at 7.30pm. There is no overnight parking and Sunday closures from October to March is a turn-off.

At the moment, the District Council appears to be more concerned that P&R might reduce their town centre parking revenues (for on street and off street parking combined these amounted to nearly £3 million in 2009/10) than they are about operating successfully.

However, with goodwill on both sides, the District and County Councils could sit down together and agree to reduce long-term parking in the town and re-cast the web page, in return for the County modifying the hours of operation and allowing the District to keep the surplus earned from on-street parking (more than £200,000 in 2006/07). This would automatically happen within a unitary authority.

Chairman's Comments on Selected Mode and Topic Strategies

Draft Road Safety Strategy

- (i) I note that you have a Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership comprising WCC, the Police, Fire & Rescue, the Highways Agency and Health Services. I wondered why you have not included one or more representatives of concerned businesses. When I was Chair of the Global Road Safety Partnership, we received strong support from a number of large businesses which had vested interests in improving road safety. In some countries, Shell and BP made their driver training facilities available to other HGV operators, and in others firms like Diageo sponsored small demonstration projects to test out new approaches to road safety. Maybe WCC should try out a similar approach.
- (ii) The overall section is all very sensible, but perhaps places too much emphasis on education and publicity. This rarely works unless firmly tied to parallel enforcement campaigns by the Police.

Draft Airport Accessibility Strategy

This focuses too much on access to BIA and Coventry airport. In Stratford we need better access to Heathrow and Gatwick – at least by having the airport busses calling at the Leisure Centre, instead of Warwick Parkway.

Draft Highway Maintenance Strategy

- (i) This section probably needs to be revised in the light of the ongoing cuts in public expenditure.
- (ii) HM14 signage. I am pleased to see the emphasis on removing redundant signage. Unfortunately, in the context of the ongoing cuts in public expenditure, such work will receive low priority.

The Network Management Duty

This is generally sensible, although NMD7 (which links to NM10) does not seem to clearly recognise the need to liaise actively with Parish/District Councils to avoid disrupting important events. For example, a power company was permitted to dig up Sanctus Road earlier this year just before the Shakespeare Marathon.

Draft Sustainable Freight Strategy

- (i) I note the availability of Amenity Weight Limits. Could these be applied to Clopton Bridge?
- (ii) In the case of objectives (i) to (iii) why not add “to discourage through movement of HGVs in built up areas.”
- (iii) SF2 says that WCC will seek through the Freight Quality Partnership to define and enforce delivery times in towns. This is too weak. The public are looking to WCC to introduce and enforce such restrictions.
- (iv) Likewise the statement that WCC will review parking and loading restrictions is too weak. The wording should be more proactive.

Draft Passenger Rail Strategy

This section may need to be revised to take account of the impact of the ongoing recession on future housing developments and the governments new emphasis on promoting tourism.

Draft Walking Strategy

- (i) I was surprised, following the seminar organised for WCC staff, to see no reference to shared space, nor to any proposals for a demonstration project to showcase its benefits to the public.
- (ii) W7 footway standards. This should refer to better maintenance and also to surfaces being as level as possible. Elderly people find it very difficult to negotiate sloping pavement surfaces, particularly when they have worn knee joints.