



SOUTH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD
(SWRR)

Evidence Report

31st July 2017

Disclaimer:

This report has been jointly prepared by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council Officers. It presents and utilises previous information provided as part of the preparation of the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy. Please note: Warwickshire County Council advises that the report is yet to be reviewed and commented upon by their Cabinet to be signed off through their recognised reports processes and procedures.



Table of Contents:

Foreword	1
1 Purpose of this Report	2
2 Background to Long Marston Airfield and the South Western Relief Road in the Core Strategy	3
3 Identification of proposed route of the South Western Relief Road	9
4 Assessing Reasonable Alternatives.....	14
5 Conclusions of the Core Strategy Planning Inspector.....	21
6 Summary and Conclusion.....	24

Table of Figures:

<i>Figure 2.1 Site Location Plan for Long Marston Airfield</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Figure 2.2 Proposed Safeguarded Route of the South Western Relief Road (as at August 2015).....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Figure 3.1 Route of the South Western Relief Road & Shottery Link Road.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Figure 4.1 Proposed Eastern Relief Road Route Options.....</i>	<i>16</i>

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Foreword

The report was commissioned to assist residents and new members in their understanding of the evolution of the proposals for the Long Marston Airfield Garden Village and the accompanying South West Relief Road (SWRR) to Stratford-upon-Avon.

The SWRR is considered necessary to mitigate the traffic impacts arising from the Garden Village. In doing so it provides an additional river crossing over the River Avon and will assist in reducing traffic congestion in the town and improving the operation of the highway network.

This report provides a summary of the key stages, assessments and analysis which were undertaken during the local plan-making process. It also provides details of the other reasonable alternatives which were considered alongside the SWRR.

Both the Long Marston Airfield site and the SWRR were assessed through the local plan-making process, and subject to the full scrutiny of an Examination in Public overseen by an independent Planning Inspector. In finding the Core Strategy 'sound' or fit for purpose, the Planning Inspector concluded that, based on all the evidence submitted and representations made, both Long Marston Airfield and SWRR are suitable and appropriate proposals.

The work done to date robustly confirms the principle of Long Marston Airfield and the SWRR. But that is not the end; it is merely the beginning, and both Councils are working closely with the site promoters and the Homes and Communities Agency to ensure that the detailed assessments of the impacts of both the site and the SWRR in particular, are fully assessed, analysed and mitigated as far as possible. This detailed work, which is currently ongoing, will also consider options relating to the alignment of the route itself, including the impacts on flooding, landscape, wildlife and residential amenity.

We can assure residents that both SDC and WCC will work with local communities to understand their concerns and ensure that such concerns are properly dealt with through the planning application process. We fully acknowledge that the delivery of the SWRR is challenging, but we must not lose sight of the wider benefits that the SWRR and the Long Marston Airfield Garden Village will bring to both Stratford-upon-Avon town and Stratford-on-Avon District.

Cllr Peter Richards, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Infrastructure, Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Cllr Jeff Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economy, Warwickshire County Council



1 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report brings together the various strands of previously published evidence and justification in respect of the Stratford-upon-Avon South Western Relief Road (SWRR). It summarises the findings of that evidence but also provides links for those who wish to review the original documentation. It aims to provide an easy-to read narrative setting out how and why the SWRR has been identified and how the current proposal has been arrived at. The report has been prepared jointly by Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) as the local planning authority and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) as the highway authority.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the purpose of the SWRR is twofold. First it is part of a package of necessary highway mitigation measures required as part of the Long Marston Airfield Garden Village development. Secondly it will relieve traffic congestion in Stratford-upon-Avon town, particularly on Clopton Bridge, the town centre and routes to the west of the town such as Evesham Place Roundabout and the Grove Road Corridor.
- 1.3 This document sets out the background to the Core Strategy and the SWRR and outlines the reasonable alternatives that have been considered.
- 1.4 Importantly, it should be stressed that, like all local plans, the Core Strategy is a strategic planning document the purpose of which is to set a framework for more detailed planning applications. As such, detailed technical work is currently underway to assess all aspects of the SWRR and ensure that its impacts are adequately mitigated.

2 Background to Long Marston Airfield and the South Western Relief Road in the Core Strategy

- 2.1 As part of the preparation of the Core Strategy, Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) consulted on a number of strategic land allocation options in its 'Focused Consultation: 2011-2031 Housing Requirement and Strategic Site Options' public consultation in February/March 2014.



2011-2031 Housing Requirement and Strategic Site Options Focused Consultation (February/Mar 2014)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205866/name/ED12%20Focused%20Consultation%202011%202031%20Housing%20Requirement%20and%20Strategic%20Site%20Options%20Feb%202014.pdf>

- 2.2 This document presented Long Marston Airfield (Option C) as a possible option to deliver an additional 3,500 homes, 2,100 of which by 2031. Figure 2.1 is a copy of the site location map from the Focused Consultation document.

Figure 2.1 Site Location Plan for Long Marston Airfield



- 2.3 Although there was support for the redevelopment of Long Marston Airfield, concerns were raised regarding the impact the development would have on the road network. SDC decided not to allocate Long Marston Airfield as a strategic site for development. One reason for this was that WCC, in its role as the highway authority had already identified congestion in Stratford-upon-Avon town as a significant issue and major constraint to further development to the south of the River Avon.

View Responses to the Further Focused Consultation (April 2014)



<https://apps.stratford.gov.uk/EDMSEExternal/Policy/Index>

Read SDC's Assessment of Representations Report to Cabinet (April 2014)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205867/name/ED12a%20Assessment%20of%20comments%20Report%20to%20Cabinet%2028%20April%202014.pdf>

- 2.4 At the time, delivery of a relief road and other key infrastructure was uncertain. Given this uncertainty regarding a key component relating to the site, it was appropriate to exclude Long Marston Airfield from the emerging Core Strategy.
- 2.5 SDC submitted its Core Strategy (excluding Long Marston Airfield and the SWRR) for examination in September 2014. The Core Strategy set out plans to deliver 10,800 new homes in the period 2011 to 2031. Following hearing sessions held in public throughout January 2015, the appointed Planning Inspector issued his Interim Report in March 2015.

Core Strategy Inspector's Interim Report (March 2015)



<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/templates/server/document-relay.cfm?doc=173539&name=Appendix%201%20Interim%20Conclusions%20March%202015.pdf>

Core Strategy Proposed Submission Version (June 2014)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205857/name/ED11%20Proposed%20Submission%20Core%20Strategy%20June%202014.pdf>



- 2.6 This found that the proposed housing requirement was insufficient to meet the needs of the District. SDC was therefore advised to reassess its housing requirement and modify its Core Strategy setting out how it would provide for this higher level of demand for homes.
- 2.7 SDC duly reassessed its housing need concluding that 14,480 new homes were required for the period 2011 to 2031. As such, additional sites were required to meet this increased need and SDC looked again at its technical evidence for potential solutions.
- 2.8 As well as looking at existing settlements, this work involved reassessing a number of strategic sites including two sites, namely Wellesbourne Airfield and Dallas Burston Polo Grounds that had not been assessed previously. Locations assessed included:
- Dallas Burston Polo Grounds
 - Gaydon / Lighthorne Heath
 - Harbury Estate (Cement Works)
 - Long Marston Airfield
 - Meon Vale (Long Marston Depot)
 - Southam Cement Works
 - South East Stratford
 - Stoneythorpe (Lower Farm)
 - Wellesbourne Airfield
- 2.9 In assessing the above locations, SDC liaised with site promoters to assess the deliverability of the sites. This included gaining a better understanding of the potential phasing of any development as well as discussions regarding any necessary infrastructure. Through these discussions, the promoters of the Long Marston Airfield site advised SDC that they would be prepared to deliver a relief road as part of an infrastructure package in order to support development at Long Marston Airfield.

2.10 Taking this into account and coupled with the other benefits of the development, SDC considered that the Long Marston Airfield site was a sustainable and reasonable option for meeting the increased housing requirement.

2.11 SDC's assessment of the various options for development locations was summarised in its Options Assessment Document published in July 2015.



Core Strategy Options Assessment (July 2015)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205818/name/ED134%20Meeting%20a%20Revised%20Housing%20Requirement%20Options%20Assessment%20July%202015.pdf>

2.12 SDC then published and consulted on its 'Proposed Modifications in Response to the Inspector's Interim Conclusions' document in August 2015. Shown as 'tracked changes', this document sets out both the Long Marston Airfield Proposal and the safeguarded land for the SWRR.

Proposed Modifications in Response to the Inspector's Interim Conclusions' (August 2015)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205854/name/ED111%20Core%20Strategy%20Proposed%20Mods%20re%20Inspectors%20Interim%20Conclusions%20Aug%202015.pdf>



View Responses to the Proposed Modifications Consultation

<https://apps.stratford.gov.uk/EDMSEExternal/Policy/Index>

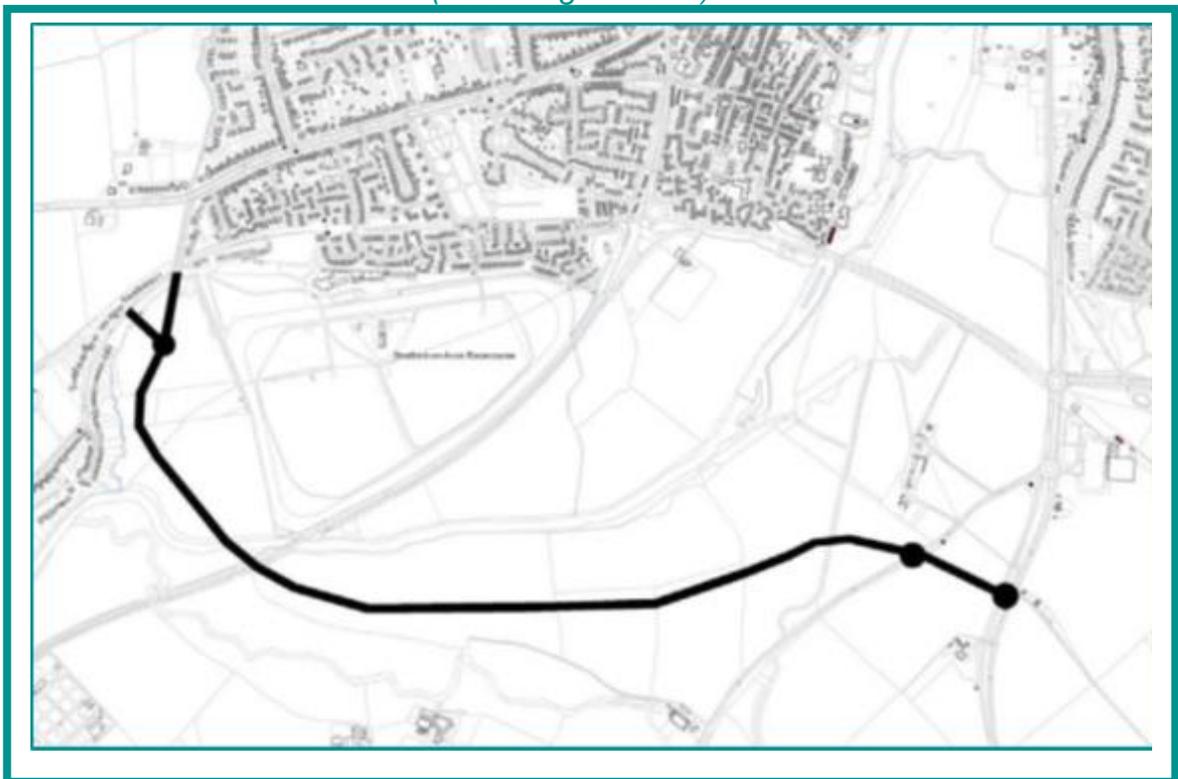
Cabinet Agenda Item 189 – 20th July 2015

<https://democracy.stratford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=485&Mid=4780>

2.13 The Proposed Modifications were considered by SDC's Cabinet at its meeting on 20th July 2015 followed by a six week public consultation from 13 August to 25 September 2015. In addition to issuing public notices, the town and parish councils and everyone on SDC's Planning policy database were informed of the consultation in accordance with SDC's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

2.14 Figure 2.2 is a copy of the map included in the Proposed Modifications document and clearly shows the proposed safeguarded and indicative route of the SWRR.

Figure 2.2 Proposed Safeguarded Route of the South Western Relief Road (as at August 2015)



2.15 Taking on-board comments received, SDC submitted the Proposed Modifications to the Core Strategy Inspector. Hearings for the Examination in Public were resumed in January 2016.



2.16 A further public consultation was then undertaken between 31 March and 12 May 2016 in respect of all modifications to the Core Strategy. The Inspector then published his final report in June 2016 (see Section 5 of this report below) setting out his conclusions and recommendations. SDC accepted the Inspector's findings and duly adopted the Core Strategy in July 2016. This included LMA along with the transport mitigation, including a SWRR, required to bring this site forward without having a detrimental impact on the network.



3 Identification of proposed route of the South Western Relief Road

- 3.1 Long Marston Airfield Site and the South Western Relief Road came forward through the options appraisal process to identify additional housing development in the Core Strategy.
- 3.2 As part of the development of the Core Strategy a transport evidence base, known as a Strategic Transport Assessment was produced. The Strategic Transport Assessment provides the District Council and County Council with robust analysis on the appropriateness of allocations and the highway infrastructure and mitigation required to accommodate these.
- 3.3 The STA, like the Core Strategy, is a high level strategic document that identifies policies and requirements and which sets the framework for more detailed planning applications.
- 3.4 The development of the Strategic Transport Assessment is an evolving and iterative process based on a number of reasonable assumptions linked to accommodating the required housing and employment provision for the District as identified in the Strategic Housing Land Assessment and Strategic Employment Land Assessment. The original STA for Stratford-on-Avon District was carried out ahead of the publication of the 2014 publication draft of the Core Strategy. Since this time a number of additional assessments and studies have been conducted to support the development of the Core Strategy.
- 3.5 Whilst transport factors are considered when sites are allocated, it is the responsibility of the Planning Authority to consider sites which are suitable and identify the infrastructure requirements to enable them to come forward in a sustainable and viable manner.
- 3.6 The original Strategic Transport Assessment was prepared by ARUP on behalf of SDC and WCC and a Phase 2 report was published in June 2013. This document acknowledged that to accommodate the identified growth and to resolve highway impact within Stratford Town Centre an additional highway crossing over the River Avon was required.



Strategic Transport Assessment Phase 2 (June 2013)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205913/name/ED475%20Stratford%20Strategic%20Transport%20Assessment%20Phase%202%20Modelling%20Report%20June%202013.pdf>

3.7 This was further supported by independent modelling which WCC commissioned to understand the residual capacity within the Clopton Bridge Improvement Scheme, as part of the LMA 400 application. This modelling identified that only the 400 additional dwellings could be accommodated prior to the provision of an additional river crossing to the south of Stratford.

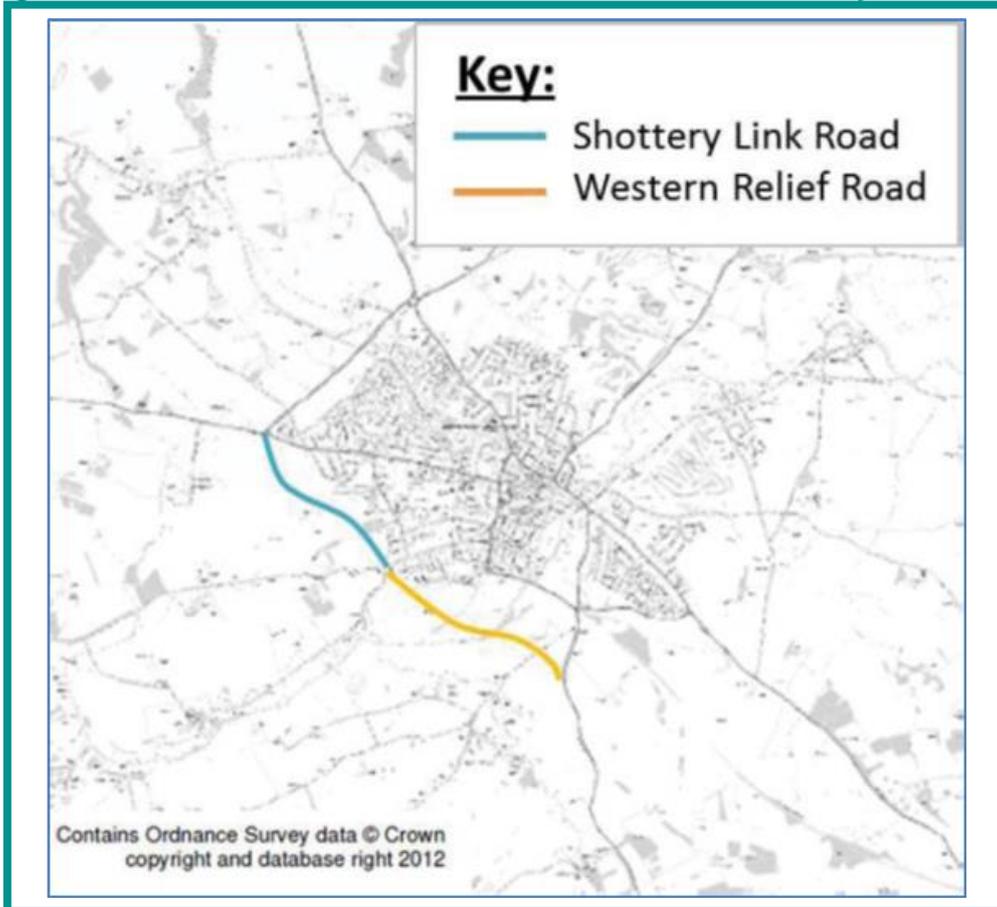
South Western Relief Road;

3.8 As stated before it was concluded within the assessments from the strategic modelling that any major housing allocation to the south of Stratford – upon – Avon required the provision of an additional crossing over the River Avon to ensure the effective operation of the highway network.

3.9 The South Western Relief Road was identified by the site promoters to enable the proposed allocation of the Long Marston Airfield Site.

3.10 The identified route provides a connection from the A3400 Shipston Road and the B4632 Campden Road, after which it crosses the Greenway and the River Avon, before connecting into the Luddington Road, B439 Evesham Road and the Shottery Link Road. Figure 3.2 shows the proposed SWRR Route (referred to as Western Relief Road at that time) and the Shottery Link Road.

Figure 3.1 Route of the South Western Relief Road & Shottery Link Road



3.11 The modelling assessments demonstrated a significant benefit to the operation of the highway network within the town centre and junctions to the west of Stratford with the inclusion of the South Western Relief Road.

STA Further Assessment of Traffic Implications in Stratford-upon-Avon (November 2015)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205918/name/ED1472%20Further%20Assessment%20of%20Traffic%20Implications%20in%20SuA%20Nov%202015.pdf>



Local Model Validation Report Trinity Way / Clifford Lane Roundabouts (November 2015)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205919/name/ED1472a%20LMVR%20Trinity%20Way%20and%20Clifford%20Lane%20Roundabouts%20Nov%202015.pdf>



- 3.12 It was identified that traffic from the south west and south of Stratford to the A46 rerouted onto the SWRR and Shottery Link Road (now known as West of Shottery Relief Road). This benefits the operation of the highway network within Stratford, including the Town Centre Gyratory, A3400 Bridge Foot / B4086 Tiddington Road Junction, A3400 Shipston Road / A4390 Trinity Way 'Seven Meadows' Roundabout Junction and the A4300 Shipston Road / B4632 Campden Road 'Waitrose' Roundabout Junction.
- 3.13 The initial concept of the South Western Relief Road was identified through the Strategic Transport Assessment process. However greater detail about the route and feasibility emerged during the Examination in Public, based on the work done by the site promoter, which was overseen by the Planning Inspector considering the suitability, acceptability and soundness of the proposals identified through the Local Plan Process.
- 3.14 During the Examination in Public the site promoters for the Long Marston Airfield were able to clearly demonstrate a viable and deliverable route for the South Western Relief Road. They presented a case demonstrating that they had obtained the land assembly to safeguard the identified route through land options, giving confidence that the road could be delivered.
- 3.15 When asked and challenged about the deliverability of the South Western Relief Road the LMA promoters stated that they would fund and deliver the identified infrastructure which was confirmed in a Statement of Common Ground. They also demonstrated initial feasibility work on the design and alignment of the route, undertaken by AMEC Foster Wheeler.



Bridge Opportunities and Constraints Study (June 2015)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205938/name/ED1535%20LMA%20Bridge%20Opportunities%20and%20Constraints%20Study%20June%202015.pdf>



3.16 Based on the evidence submitted by SDC, WCC and the representations from all parties, the Planning Inspector in his Final Report found the allocation of Long Marston Airfield and the associated South Western Relief Road to be sound, given the level of information produced and the clear commitment from the site promoters to ensure the viable delivery of the road.



4 Assessing Reasonable Alternatives

- 4.1 Concerns have been raised that not all reasonable routes have been considered for assessment which would provide viable alternatives to the South Western Relief Road.
- 4.2 What constitutes a reasonable alternative is a matter of judgement but there is no requirement to test or assess every potential or theoretical option, particularly if those options are not reasonable in terms of the likelihood of their delivery.
- 4.3 A recent Court judgement¹ held that it is primarily for the decision maker to identify objectives, give each appropriate weight, and determine whether they were met by a particular option. If a particular option was incapable of meeting the identified objectives such that in practice it would never be pursued, there was no point in subjecting it to an environmental assessment. With respect to the Core Strategy, the Examination Inspector concluded that the assessment of options was sufficient in order for the Plan to be 'sound' and capable of being adopted. This position has not been challenged.
- 4.4 Given the scale of the Long Marston Airfield development and the SWRR, as part of the planning application process, the applicants also have to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA is also required to test reasonable alternatives in respect of detail of the SWRR alignment and that work is currently underway and subject to its own statutory and consultation procedures.
- 4.5 The District Council's response to the applicant's request for an EIA scoping opinion in relation to the SWRR identifies the following topics that need to be addressed:
- Transport
 - Ecology and Nature Conservation
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal
 - Noise and Vibration

¹ [Ashdown Forest Economic Development LLP v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government \[2014\] EWHC 406 \(Admin\), \[2015\] Env. L.R. D1](#)



- Air Quality
- Heritage
- Water Environment
- Socio Economic
- Ground Conditions and Contamination
- Agricultural Land and Soils

4.6 In addition the following options are to be considered through the EIA process by the applicants and their consultants:

- 1. Current alignment (avoiding SSSI), using embankment and flood culverts, road over the Greenway
- 2. Current alignment (avoiding SSSI), using structural approaches (viaduct) especially north of the River Avon
- 3. As (1) or (2) above, but southern alignment and junctions with Campden Road and Shipston Road
- 4. Do nothing (i.e. no SWRR)
- 5 As (1), (2) or (3) but run through the SSSI to create more distance between road and residential properties
- 6. Tunnel under the River Avon and the Greenway, principally as alignment (1) or (3)
- 7. Options (1), (2) or (3) but take the Greenway over the road alignment

4.7 Given the transport assessment evidence clearly shows that mitigation by way of a relief road is required to alleviate the impacts on Stratford-upon-Avon town, SDC has considered that the only reasonable alternative to the SWRR is an Eastern Relief Road, and this was assessed accordingly. However, it is useful to set out why a range of other potential options were not considered.

4.8 SDC and WCC have considered alternative options which have been raised and comments on these are provided below.

STA Options Analysis Report (April 2014)



<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/205910/name/ED471%20Strategic%20Transport%20Assessment%20Options%20Analysis%20Report%20April%202014.pdf>

Do Nothing;

4.9 The Highway Authority as part of the development of the Strategic Transport Assessment undertook a 'Do Nothing' Scenario. This modelled all the proposed development growth for Stratford-upon-Avon without any highway mitigation schemes or improvement.

4.10 The outputs demonstrated that the existing highway network could not accommodate any further housing allocations south of the River Avon.

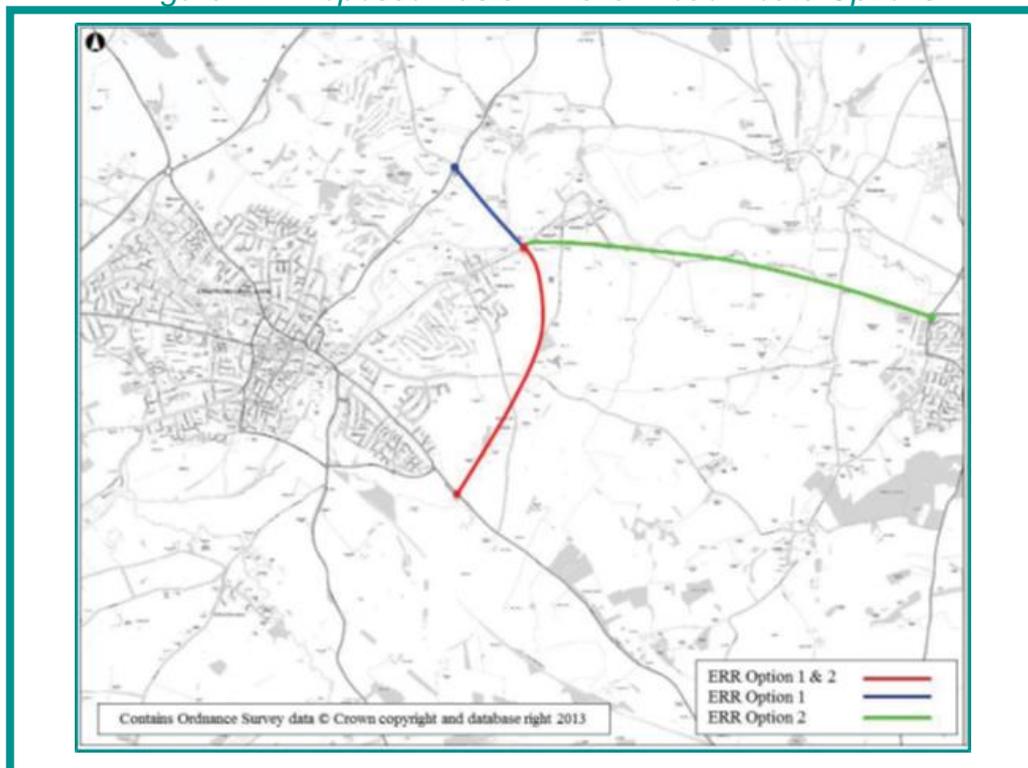
Eastern Relief Road Option;

4.11 The ERR option emerged from the proposal for an allocation of a development of 2,750 homes and 8 hectares of employment land to the south east of Stratford-upon-Avon. The proposal was identified as part of the landowners' promotion of a South East Stratford allocation in the Core Strategy.

4.12 Two route options for the ERR were identified and assessed which are identified below and in Figure 3.1;

- *Option 1*; heading north across the River Avon to join the A439 Warwick Road; and,
- *Option 2*; heading east to join the A429 at Wellesbourne

Figure 4.1 Proposed Eastern Relief Road Route Options





4.13 The following text provides commentary on each of these options which were considered in the Strategic Transport Assessment.

ERR - Option 1:

4.14 The modelling demonstrated that this proposal would provide additional capacity onto the highway network and would provide benefit to the operation of the highway network within Stratford Town Centre. However, the main benefit would be to accommodate a South East Stratford Urban Extension which was being proposed. Such a road would serve traffic movements from large-scale development in this area which wanted to utilise the A46 and M40 Corridors and avoid having to travel through the town centre, especially the constrained A3400 Bridge Foot / B4086 Tiddington Road Junction and the Town Centre Gyratory.

4.15 In terms of other strategic trips, the proposal did provide benefit by rerouting existing trips from the south west of Stratford benefiting the Town Centre. However, there was deterioration in the operation capacity of the A3400 Shipston Road / B4632 Campden Road 'Waitrose' Roundabout Junction and A3400 Shipston Road / A4390 Trinity Way 'Seven Meadows' Roundabout Junction.

ERR – Option 2:

4.16 The modelling demonstrated that this proposal would provide limited benefit to the operation of the highway network and would actually have a detrimental impact on certain locations.

4.17 The main result of this option was that more traffic was drawn through Stratford Town Centre from the A46 by traffic heading to the east of the District and vice versa because it provided a potentially more reliable and quicker journey than existing routes.

4.18 This put significant pressure on existing corridors which suffer congestion in the peak periods, and exacerbated this issue further, notably the Birmingham Road Corridor, but also the A3400 Bridge Foot / B4086 Tiddington Road Junction and the Town Centre Gyratory.



Further West Route;

- 4.19 The consideration of this option has identified that the route and its potential has little merit as it would not be on the strategic desire line of trips within Stratford Town, especially the north / south movement. As there would be little time saving to motorists for this route they would continue to utilise existing routes through the town centre, exacerbating issues on the Birmingham Road Corridor, Clopton Bridge / Tiddington Road Junction and Seven Meadows Roundabout and the A3400 Shipston Road / B44632 Campden Road 'Waitrose' Roundabout Junction.
- 4.20 In addition it would attract additional traffic through surrounding villages such as Welford-on Avon, Milcote, Long Marston and Binton, many of which have roads that are very rural in nature (e.g. country lanes) and are unsuitable for significant increases in motorised traffic.
- 4.21 In terms of additional impact the road would still have to cross the River Avon and its floodplain at some point, and there would be a significant impact on the landscape due to the rural nature of the surrounding area. In addition the length of the road would be greater and its impact is therefore magnified, as are building costs.

Further East Route;

- 4.22 A similar argument applies to a route further to the east of Stratford-upon-Avon towards Wellesbourne. The actual benefit to the highway work is negligible due to the location not being on the core north / south route which motorists and vehicles want to travel through the town.
- 4.23 As there would be no time saving to most motorists for this route they would continue to utilise existing routes through the town centre, exacerbating issues on the Birmingham Road Corridor, Clopton Bridge / Tiddington Road Junction and Seven Meadows Roundabout and the A3400 Shipston Road / B44632 Campden Road 'Waitrose' Roundabout Junction.
- 4.24 Also traffic using such a road may reroute in order to access the Town Centre network and utilise Tiddington Road and Loxley Road. This would still result in additional traffic having to utilise the constrained Clopton Bridge / Tiddington Road Junction.



Tunnelling;

- 4.25 Tunnelling is often perceived as a way of preventing or reducing the impact on the surrounding landscape. However, to be able to have a tunnel significant level changes would be required to enable the highway to get to under the River Avon. This would result in cuttings being utilised which are also visible within the landscape. Significant technical issues, such as those relating to drainage and ecology, would also have to be resolved and the road would still have to tie in the southern end of the West of Shottery Relief Road in the vicinity of Luddington Road.
- 4.26 In addition tunnels require significant entrance and exit portal lengths due to the changes in level and this determines where they can be located and their ability to tie back into the highway network. Other considerations include soil type, bedrock and construction methods.
- 4.27 A key issue is cost and the impact it would have on the viability of the scheme and the deliverability of the SWRR. Based on consultants advice the cost of a tunnel would be approximately £100 million to £150 million.

Western Route to A46 via Bidford-on-Avon;

- 4.28 A Western Route to the A46 in the vicinity of Salford Priors would provide little benefit to the operation of the highway network within Stratford Town Centre. As has been mentioned previously the dominant traffic flow is a north / south movement through the town, with motorists utilising the route of least resistance and most time effective.
- 4.29 It is highly unlikely a motorist heading north would utilise the A46 via Bidford-on-Avon as this route would substantially increase their journey time. Therefore motorists would continue to utilise existing routes through the town centre, exacerbating issues on the Birmingham Road Corridor, Clopton Bridge / Tiddington Road Junction and Seven Meadows Roundabout and the A3400 Shipston Road / B44632 Campden Road 'Waitrose' Roundabout Junction.
- 4.30 It should be noted that Bidford – on – Avon is also experiencing a period of growth with new residential development. Whilst it has been demonstrated that with mitigation these developments can be accommodated onto the highway



network, a strategic route operating through this area could be detrimental to the effective operation of the highway network in this locality.

Heavy Rail Re-instatement in Lieu of New Road;

- 4.31 Whilst all options to promote sustainable travel should be undertaken, the provision of heavy rail in lieu of a new road will have limited benefit to the existing operation of the highway network within Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 4.32 In relation to heavy rail, the cost of reinstating the line and providing the rail service through Stratford-upon-Avon would be financially prohibitive when applied directly to the development of Long Marston Airfield, the timescales are unknown and there is currently no commitment from the rail industry.
- 4.33 The Strategic Modelling which has been undertaken demonstrates that an additional river crossing is required to ensure and enable the effective and efficient operation of the highway network with housing allocations to the south of the town, including the Long Marston Airfield new settlement. Furthermore, the SWRR in the manner proposed and identified in the Core Strategy has been proven to be the most effective, viable and achievable means of providing such a route.

5 Conclusions of the Core Strategy Planning Inspector

- 5.1 Having heard and scrutinised all of the evidence and arguments both for and against the inclusion of Long Marston Airfield and the SWRR, and considered the reasonable alternatives and other sites, the Inspector found both proposals, along with the Core Strategy as a whole, sound i.e. fit for purpose.



Core Strategy Inspector's Final Report (June 2016)

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/templates/server/document-relay.cfm?doc=173538&name=Inspectors%20Final%20Report%20June%202016.pdf>

- 5.2 He also concluded that the Sustainability Appraisal, which was produced through an iterative process during the preparation of the Core Strategy to assess the environmental impact of strategic development options, provided a reliable evidence base (see para. 131 of his Final Report).
- 5.3 It should be stressed that, like all local plans, the Core Strategy is a strategic planning document the purpose of which is to set framework for more detailed planning applications.
- 5.4 Relevant sections of the Inspector's Final Report in respect of Long Marston Airfield and the SWRR include paragraphs 85-87, 124-127 and 221-267. Of particular relevance are his findings in relation to the following specific issues:

Wildlife

- 5.5 The Inspector gave significant weight to Natural England's advice that the SWRR would not damage or result in potential negative effects on the SSSI. The agreed statement could not be clearer in saying: "...the level of information submitted to the Core Strategy Examination is adequate to inform the plan making process". He was clear that *"If the concern expressed by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust had any substance then NE would not have signed up to this agreed statement. Neither WWT nor any other party gave reasons at the Examination to dispute the legal opinion which found that the legal duties under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are complied with at this plan making stage."* (para. 222)



Flooding

5.6 The Inspector's Report states that *"The EA has confirmed it has: "...no in principle objections" to the SWRR. It has also signed a Statement of Common Ground with the Promoter, which indicates that it is: "generally satisfied that the commitments made and the outline designs submitted will result in an acceptable development"."* (see para. 235) He went on to say that *"Whilst a common concern related to flooding the EA is the Government's expert advisor and so it is appropriate to attach significant weight to its view."* (para. 236)

Landscape

5.7 The Inspector accepted the opinion set out in the Interim SA Report, which basically says the flat landscape may limit the extent of visibility of the SWRR and its assessment of the SWRR post-mitigation. He came to the conclusion that *"For these reasons there is no basis to find that the landscape impact of the SWRR would render Proposal LMA unsound."* (para. 232)

Amenity

5.8 The Inspector found that *"the landscape impact of the SWRR would be acceptable and there is no right to a view. Noise and air pollution have been considered [and] there is nothing before the examination to suggest these matters cannot be dealt with by the imposition of planning conditions at the appropriate stage."* He acknowledged the need for a sensitive lighting scheme and whilst the rationale was the impact on fauna, he concluded that *"its impact on local residents can be addressed and is likely to be limited. There is no reason to find that lights from moving vehicles cannot also be addressed at the detailed design stage."* (para. 240)

Relationship to the West of Shottery Relief Road

5.9 The degree to which there would be co-ordination between the WRR and the SWRR was the subject of significant debate, but ultimately the relevant parties have signed a Position Statement. Accordingly, the Inspector found no reason to doubt the SWRR will be able to connect into the existing public highway at Luddington Road. (para. 225)



Sustainability Appraisal/SEA

5.10 The Inspector considered various criticisms of the SA, including some in relation to LMA and the SWRR. He concluded that *“it remains unclear why any of these rather disparate arguments supports the basic claim that this represents a fundamental flaw with the SA.”* (para. 127)

Public Involvement

5.11 The Inspector addressed the concerns expressed by local residents about the lack of consultation regarding the SWRR. He was aware of the minutes of a meeting of Luddington Parish Council and a meeting of Stratford Town Council, both in September 2015, when the issue was discussed. He concluded that *“it is clear the Council did undertake a comprehensive consultation exercise in September 2015 when Proposal LMA and the SWRR first appeared in the CS.”* (para. 237). He also responded to the criticism that there had been limited involvement of local residents in the Examination Hearing session when LMA and the SWRR was discussed. He concluded that this *“cannot reasonably be equated to a lack of scrutiny. The issues of need and viability have been fully debated drawing on expert input. There would need to be significant public engagement as the scheme goes forward, e.g. following submission of a planning application once the detailed design has been worked up. This is not a good basis on which to open up a range of alternative routes beyond the safeguarded corridor...”* (para. 239)



6 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 The evidence is clear that a relief road is required to mitigate the highway impacts of significant additional development to the south of Stratford-upon-Avon town.
- 6.2 The evidence shows that a SWRR provides the greatest benefit for new development located to the southwest of the town, including at Long Marston Airfield. Modelling identified that the trips generated by the development at Long Marston Airfield (LMA) would have caused significant additional congestion and traffic queues particularly in the vicinity of Clopton Bridge and at various junctions in Stratford Town. Further modelling work showed that a road connecting Shipston Road with the southern end of the West of Shottery Relief Road would accommodate the traffic growth created by the LMA and prevent the deterioration in traffic conditions on the road network described above. This is achieved by providing additional road capacity and route options for both the new traffic generated by LMA and also existing traffic.
- 6.3 The identification of Long Marston Airfield as a strategic location for new development was found sound at an Examination in Public held by an independent Planning Inspector, who reached that conclusion having considered the evidence and heard the arguments both for and against the scheme.
- 6.4 As with all proposals, development generates impacts wherever it is located and similar impacts would be generated with an ERR, albeit in different areas and affecting different interests.
- 6.5 The provision of the SWRR is not an easy option and both SDC and WCC are working with the site promoters, its engineers and local stakeholders to ensure that its impacts are mitigated as far as practically possible. In preparing the Core Strategy and the SWRR and LMA proposals, alternatives have been considered and under the EIA Regulations, detailed options for the design of the SWRR continue to be assessed.



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