



Avon Rail Link

Report for the SLPG



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Contents

1	SUMMARY	1
2	INTRODUCTION	2
	Basis of this Report	2
	Local Transport Plan	2
	Background to the “Avon Rail Link”	2
3	POLICY CONTEXT	4
	Transport Policy.....	4
	Draft Warwickshire LTP3.....	6
	Warwickshire LTP2 2006 – 2011.....	8
	Land Use Planning Policy.....	10
	Regional Planning Policy.....	11
	Local Planning Policy	12
	Long Marston Development	13
4	RAIL POSITION.....	15
	Introduction	15
	Rail Strategies	15
	Franchise Situation.....	15
	Chiltern Railways’ Plans	16
	Freight.....	16
5	TOURISM	17
6	JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEW WARWICKSHIRE LTP.....	18
	Introduction	18
	Transport Policy.....	18
	Land Use Policy.....	18
	Air Quality	19
	Freight Management	19
	Passenger Transport Management.....	19
	Tourism Benefits.....	20
	Long Marston Development and the “Greenway”	20

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG). SPLG is a representative group that aims to promote the improvement of rail services on the Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon line. The SPLG seek to ensure that the potential reinstatement of the Avon Rail Link forms part of the forthcoming third Warwickshire Local Transport Plan (LTP-3) policy framework to ensure that investigations into the reinstatement are made during the lifespan of the LTP
- 1.2 There is a conclusive policy based case for including the Avon Rail Link as an aspiration that should be investigated during the LTP's lifespan. Transport benefits, current land-use planning uncertainty and the potential for positive economic effects in the Stratford-on-Avon District all indicate that an LTP commitment to produce a definitive assessment that reflect current and future rail and transport conditions should be made.
- 1.3 The opportunity created by the developers of Long Marston to part fund the required technical work should be seen positively by the County Council and as an opportunity to meet their requirement in the Transport Act 2000 to develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities in their area.

2 Introduction

Basis of this Report

- 2.1 The Avon Rail Link is a proposal to reinstate the rail line between Stratford-upon-Avon and Honeybourne. A local debate on the reinstatement is currently being undertaken due the need for decisions to be made on the policies to be included in the 3rd round of local transport plans (LTP) being developed by Warwickshire and Worcestershire County Councils.
- 2.2 The LTPs need to be submitted in draft form to Central Government in June 2011 and therefore early decisions on priorities are required to ensure that the appropriate political approval processes can be undertaken. Warwickshire has published a draft LTP that has been subject to initial public consultation. Consultation with elected members is ongoing and a further round of member briefings is to be held on 24th September 2010.
- 2.3 This report has been produced on behalf of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG). SPLG is a representative group that aims to promote the improvement of rail services on the Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon line. The SPLG seek to ensure that the potential reinstatement of the Avon Rail Link forms part of the forthcoming LTP policy framework to ensure that investigations into the reinstatement are made during the lifespan of the LTP.

Local Transport Plan

- 2.4 The new third LTP will not be in the same form as the previous 2 rounds of LTPs. Previously, a 5 year transport policy was developed in conjunction with a co-terminus 5 year implementation programme designed to make best use of the funding available. The new LTP will retain a delivery plan element but for only three years and introduce a longer term transport policy framework for the next 20 years.
- 2.5 The reasons for this change in how the LTP works is due to the desire of central Government to link outcomes and delivery in the short term to the timescales associated with the wider “Delivering a Sustainable Transport System” policy and other transport funding timetables (e.g. that for rail) and for policy to become more aligned with land-use planning policies.
- 2.6 This change in emphasis to include long term aspirations for transport interventions opens up the possibility of including the Avon Rail Link as a clear aspiration in the “policy” section of the new LTP.

Background to the “Avon Rail Link”

- 2.7 The Avon Rail Link has been subject to much local debate over the years. Warwickshire County Council whilst noting the potential of the line has remained neutral and has stated it would require a business and technical case to be developed before support could be forthcoming.

- 2.8 The position of the County Council is understood to be based on the County Council commissioned Halcrow Fox in 1996 which identified no technical reasons why a reinstatement of the line between Stratford-upon-Avon station and Honeybourne could not take place. The SLPG have recently (August 2010) made a detailed response to the County Council on their interpretation and therefore long held position on the study outputs. Particularly in relation to the route through the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon which provides a potential way forward that deals with the County Council's concerns over traffic flow at Evesham Place and potential noise issues. The SLPG submission also makes the case that the "Greenway" leisure route along the trackbed can be accommodated in a reinstatement situation.
- 2.9 The business case developed in 1996 made certain assumptions about capacity and line-speeds on adjacent rail lines that have been overtaken by changes to the network in recent years. Journey times and changes in rail service patterns (e.g the de-facto removal of direct train services between Stratford-upon-Avon and Oxford, via Leamington Spa) also mean that the study's business case does not remain valid today. Given these changes any decisions should be based on up to date assumptions which reflect current and, where known, future rail related parameters.

3 Policy Context

Transport Policy

Delivering a Sustainable Transport System – November 2008

- 3.10 Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) was published in November 2008, and builds upon the objectives of 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' (TaSTS) (2007), the recommendations of the Eddington Transport Study (2006), and the Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change (2006). DaSTS outlines, and consults on, a revised framework for the planning and development of National and Regional Transport Networks beyond 2014.
- 3.11 DaSTS builds upon the broad goals identified within TaSTS, which reflect the Government's core objectives. DaSTS refines these goals and they are the basis upon which future transport and infrastructure policy will be developed. The five goals specifically relating to transport are:
- to **support** national **economic** competitiveness and **growth**, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
 - to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of **tackling climate change**;
 - to **contribute to better safety, security and health** and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
 - to **promote** greater **equality of opportunity** for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and
 - to **improve air quality of life for transport users and non – transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.**
- 3.12 The 'DaSTS Main Report' builds on the refined goals identified within TaSTS, upon which the future of transport planning is focused. The main report reinforces targets for national climate change. Reference is also made to the National Policy Statements for the Strategic road Network, Rail Networks, Ports, and Airports.
- 3.13 DaSTS identifies the Government target of reducing greenhouse gases by 80% before 2050 (when compared to 1990 levels). Through this commitment, DaSTS encourages the promotion of low-carbon technologies and improvements to the efficiency of all modes of transport.

Guidance on Local Transport Plans – July 2009

- 3.14 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) was introduced by the Transport Act 2000 in order to promote the longer term planning of local transport interventions. The LTP replaced the annual Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) Framework which focused on infrastructure delivery. Originally, plans lasted for 5 years until replacement. The first round of LTP's were in place between 2000 and 2005, with the second round of LTP succeeding between 2006 and 2011. LTP3 will replace the LTP2 by the 31st March 2011 when the current LTP2's will expire. However LTP3 will now last for a longer period of time up to 20 years.

- 3.15 The Local Transport Act 2008 has changed the emphasis of the LTP from being a medium term strategy and delivery plan to being a short term delivery / implementation vehicle and a long-term (up to 20 years) strategy. The emphasis is now on individual transport authorities to decide when to update the LTP in line with local needs.
- 3.16 LTP3 will need to rise to the challenges set by national transport policy which now recognises the link between transport and wider social activity. Five goals have been established by Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) which will require translation into local policy and interventions. These goals are:-
- Support Economic Growth;
 - Reduce Carbon Emissions;
 - Promote Equality of Opportunity;
 - Contribute to Better Safety, Security and Health; and
 - Improve Quality of Life and a Healthy Natural Environment.
- 3.17 Within the 'Guidance on Local Transport Plans' these goals have also been identified, alongside 'Cross-Network Challenges' and 'Cities and Regional Networks Challenges'. These will have to be incorporated into the emerging policies, targets and measures which form the LTP.

Land Use Planning System

- 3.18 The guidance on LTP3 is clear that there should be a clear and strong connection to the Local Development Frameworks at the local planning level. However a connection should also be maintained to national planning policy guidance in the form of Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport and DaSTS. This will ensure a consistent approach to the development of the policies and that LTP is in line with all three tiers of the land use planning system.
- 3.19 It is likely that over the period which the forthcoming LTP is adopted there will be a number of amendments and restructuring of the National Planning Framework are proposed, with the forthcoming Localism Bill providing clarity to the current uncertainty within the planning system.

Geographic location of solutions

- 3.20 In many cases, the LTP will be constrained within administrative boundaries, whereas the solutions to the travel issues in a particular LTP area may lie outside the transport authority's boundary.

Demonstrating maximum sustainable transport potential

- 3.21 Under DaSTS the development and promotion of sustainable travel has been put at the forefront of the national transport planning agenda, with road building as a final option. Therefore the interventions within the LTP should primarily promote sustainable transport and public transport solutions. Greater emphasis is to be placed on smarter choices and interventions that can influence travel behaviour, as identified through the English Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns Initiative.

Climate Change and Air Quality

- 3.22 The Climate Change Act 2008 and the targets for greenhouse gas emissions set by Central Government aim to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality nationally and contribute to cutting the global carbon emissions. As the transport sector represents 21% of total UK domestic

greenhouse gas emissions the move to a low carbon transport system will be key to meeting these targets. The Government's strategy "Low carbon transport: A greener future" sets out the core DfT policies in this area. Reducing congestion is likely to assist in reducing the impact of climate change.

Draft Warwickshire LTP3

3.23 Warwickshire County Council has undertaken the phase 2 consultation of the LTP3 process. This consultation was on the draft LTP for the county. The revised LTP identified the following goals to be achieved over the lifetime of the document;

- To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens in order to promote a fairer, more inclusive society;
- To seek reliable and efficient transport networks which will help promote full employment and a strong, sustainable local and sub-regional economy;
- To reduce the impact of transport on people and the [built and natural] environment and improve the journey experience of transport users;
- To improve the safety, security and health of people by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
- To encourage integration of transport, both in terms of policy planning and the physical interchange of modes; and
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change.

3.24 The draft LTP3 follows the same structure of the previous LTP, with a number of strategies identified to achieve these goals.

Air Quality Strategy

3.25 The objectives of the Strategy are:

- To address air quality issues that have, or will arise, due to transport-related issues;
- To inform and complement the County Council's wider policies on transport contained in the LTP;
- To take a proactive, rather than a reactive approach, to dealing with future air quality issues and taking measures to minimise them before they occur;
- To create a realistic, deliverable Action Plan with schemes and initiatives for improving air quality related to transport issues within the County; and
- To integrate the Strategy fully within the Local Transport Plan, complementing the schemes and objectives contained in other parts of the document.

3.26 The vision of the County Council's Air Quality Strategy is:

'To take a proactive approach to maintaining and improving air quality within the County where transport is causing unacceptable levels of air pollution, in order to improve health and quality of life for all'.

3.27 The aim of the Air Quality Strategy is therefore to work in partnership to improve areas of existing air quality problems, maintain areas with good air quality and to promote and support practices, activities and lifestyle choices that can achieve this. The Air Quality Strategy also aims to support and promote all transport policies that contribute to improving air quality within Warwickshire.

Policy AQA5: Integration of air quality and transport planning

3.28 Through the planning process, the County Council and the five Warwickshire District/Borough Councils will take into account known and emerging air quality issues to ensure that new development:

- Does not exacerbate an existing air quality problem, or trigger the declaration of a new Air Quality Management Area;
- Is well served by public transport, walking and cycling facilities; and
- Is supported by measures such as Travel Plans to ensure that sustainable travel patterns are maintained.

Land Use and Transportation Strategy

3.29 The vision of Warwickshire County Council's Land Use and Transportation Strategy is:

'To encourage new development, which is accessible, safe, sustainable and integrated with the transport network, including modes other than the car.'

3.30 The aim of the Land Use and Transportation Strategy is to make new development (especially those with significant predicted traffic movements) as sustainable as possible through the integration of land use and transportation planning. This can be achieved by:

- Actively promoting accessibility for all sections of the community, based on the most sustainable modes of transport;
- Seeking to optimise the location of land uses/developments with the transport networks, including locating major trip attractors and generators in close proximity to suitable public transport services; and
- Promoting sustainable travel through securing Travel Plans with large employment sites within the County.

3.31 The four key themes of the Strategy are:

- To encourage patterns of sustainable development;
- To promote a choice of transport by public transport cycling and walking;
- To promote accessibility to education, training, jobs, shopping and leisure facilities; and
- To reduce the need to travel by car.

Policy LUT3: Sustainable Developments

3.32 The County Council will promote sustainable development and seek developer contributions, where appropriate, to provide for public transport, community transport, pedestrian and cycling facilities, traffic management measures and travel packs to serve new developments.

Sustainable Freight Distribution Strategy

3.33 Within the context of these challenges, the objectives of the Sustainable Freight Distribution Strategy are as follows:

- To achieve an appropriate balance between the need to sustain and support the Sub-Regional and local economy whilst protecting and improving the environment;
- To encourage operating efficiency and the dissemination of best practice in freight transport; and
- To encourage integration within and between all freight transport modes.

Policy SF3: Rail Freight Strategy

3.34 The County Council will work in partnership with a number of key partners to help promote, improve access to and expand rail freight facilities where appropriate.

3.35 Policy SF3 will be delivered via the following:

- Work in partnership with the freight industry, DfT, Highways Agency, Network Rail and other stakeholders to promote the transfer of freight from road to rail;
- Work in partnership with the Local Planning Authorities to identify and protect selected sites for future rail freight connection;
- Support access to existing rail freight facilities, and, subject to planning and environmental constraints, their expansion; and
- Encourage new development that is likely to generate significant freight movements to be located in areas that have good access to the rail network.

Passenger Rail Strategy

Policy PTPR4: Rail Network Capacity and Infrastructure Improvements

3.36 The County Council will encourage the provision of improvements to the capacity of the infrastructure of the rail network to increase capacity to enable improved performance and to provide additional services and stations.

Policy PTPR5: New Rail Services and Stations

3.37 The County Council will develop proposals for new rail services and stations (including strategic park & ride / parkway stations) to increase the accessibility of the rail network to existing and potential passengers.

Warwickshire LTP2 2006 – 2011

3.38 The LTP2 was adopted by Warwickshire County Council in March 2006. It provided the transport strategy for the council, tackling a number of transport issues through a variety of strategies and interventions. These strategies included the Air Quality Strategy, and Passenger Rail Strategy highlighted below.

Air Quality Strategy

3.39 The objectives for this Air Quality Strategy, which have been developed in conjunction with the Local Transport Plan, reflect local, regional and national policy on air quality and transport. The objectives of the Strategy are:

- To be primarily concerned with air quality issues that have, and will arise, due to transport-related issues;
- To create a general five-year Action Plan for Warwickshire with schemes and initiatives for improving air quality related to transport issues within the County;
- To inform the County Council's transport policy;
- To take a proactive stance, rather than a reactive one, foreseeing potential future problems and taking measures to minimise them before they occur;
- To integrate the Strategy fully within the Local Transport Plan, complementing the schemes and objectives contained within all other parts of the larger document; and
- To be able to act as a freestanding document on its own merits away from the Local Transport Plan.

3.40 The vision of Warwickshire County Council's Air Quality Strategy is:

'To take a proactive approach to maintaining and improving air quality within the County where transport is causing unacceptable levels of air pollution, in order to improve quality of life for all.'

3.41 The overall aim of the Air Quality Strategy is to work to improve areas of existing air quality problems, maintain areas with good air quality and to promote and support practices, activities and lifestyles, including modes of transport that can achieve this. The Air Quality Strategy also aims to support and promote all transport policies that contribute to improving air quality within Warwickshire.

3.42 The Air Quality Strategy seeks to present a number of broad ranging policies, highlighting the air quality problems specific to Warwickshire. These inform the specific schemes and initiatives in the Action Plan.

3.43 The major themes of the Air Quality Strategy are:

- To improve areas with poor air quality and maintain those areas that currently experience good air quality
- To encourage sustainable forms of transport, which reduces reliance on private cars and minimises emissions to air; and
- To promote awareness of alternative travel choices.

Passenger Rail Strategy

3.44 The Rail Strategy is the overall transport objectives of the Local Transport Plan 2005 which have been developed to reflect national, regional and local policy which are:

- To improve accessibility to the transport system in order to promote a fairer, more inclusive society;
- To seek a transport system which will promote full employment and a strong, sustainable local and sub-regional economy;
- To reduce the impact of transport on the environment through the management and control of adverse impacts;

- To improve the environment and safety of people when they are using the transport system; and
 - To encourage the integration of transport, both in terms of policy planning and the physical interchange of modes.
- 3.45 The Passenger Rail Strategy will contribute to achieving the objectives in the LTP by promoting a passenger rail network, which:
- Offers accessibility through the public transport system, both in terms of physical access to transport and its availability, to the widest cross section of the population;
 - Gives people (including those who do not have access to cars) more travel choices to access work, services and leisure activities;
 - Offers affordable fares to passengers;
 - Provides an attractive and sustainable travel alternative to the car thereby helping to reduce traffic congestion and pollution levels and improving air quality and the environment; and
 - Encourages integration with other modes of transport.
- 3.46 The vision of Warwickshire County Council's Passenger Rail Strategy is:
- 'An affordable, accessible, safe, convenient, environmentally friendly and integrated network of rail services, capable of attracting an increasing market share for rail thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives in the Warwickshire's Local Transport Plan 2005'.*
- 3.47 The aim of the Passenger Rail Strategy is to grow the market for public transport in general and rail services in particular by making the product attractive both to existing and potential users. It will achieve significant improvement in the provision of rail services and facilities to the people of Warwickshire by following a customer-driven approach designed to identify and overcome barriers to the use of public transport.
- 3.48 The Passenger Rail Strategy seeks to provide a range of measures and proposals, which will result in the growth of the market for rail services.
- The three major themes of the Passenger Rail Strategy are:
 - To improve the quality of existing rail services and stations;
 - To provide new rail services and stations to meet unmet needs;
 - To improve the integration of rail with other public transport, other modes of transport and with the road network.

Land Use Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering a Sustainable Development – 2005

- 3.49 Planning Policy Statement (PPS): 1 was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), now superseded by Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), in 2005.

This document sets out the Government's objectives for the planning system. The statement clearly identifies five clear aims of the planning system. These are;

- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life;
- Contributing to sustainable economic development;
- Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
- Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and
- Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

3.50 The PPS also sets out the general approach which should be undertaken to deliver sustainable development. The statement includes a specific point to;

'Reduce the need to travel and encourage accessible public transport provision to secure more sustainable patterns of transport development. Planning should actively manage patterns of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport and focus development in existing centres and near to major public transport interchanges.'

(CLG, 2005, p.12)

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport – 2001

3.51 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport was published by ODPM, which has been subsequently superseded by CLG, in 2001. The guidance sets out the Government's policy in relation to transport within the land use planning system.

'Land use planning has a key role in delivering the Governments integrated transport strategy. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses, planning can help reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and make it easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.'

(ODPM,2001)

3.52 The guidance identifies a series of objectives to integrate land use planning at a national, regional and local level. In order to actively promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and moving in freight, reducing the need to travel, especially by car.

Regional Planning Policy

Abolishment of the Regional Spatial Strategy

3.53 The government announced on the 6th of July 2010 the revocation of Regional Strategies. In the longer term the 'Localism Bill' which is to be introduced during the current parliamentary session will set out the future direction of land-use planning policy making.

Local Planning Policy

Stratford-on-Avon Local Development Framework

- 3.54 Stratford-on-Avon is currently preparing their Local Development Framework. Currently the main focus is on the development of the Core Strategy. The district planning authority aimed to submit the document to the Secretary of State in autumn this year. However, due to the West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Examination in Public, and subsequent abandonment of the RSS by the Coalition Government this timescale has slipped.
- 3.55 The District Council is now reviewing the position of the core strategy and how to take the strategy forward. It is envisaged that they will review the current consultation draft of the core strategy and make the required amendments, and submit the Core Strategy in autumn 2011. However, due to the current uncertainty its adoption could be delayed further.

Consultation Core Strategy – February 2010

- 3.56 The consultation draft core strategy was published by Stratford-on-Avon District Council in February 2010. The document sets out the proposed planning policies for the district. However, these have not been formally adopted and therefore have no legal standing at present.
- 3.57 The document identifies a clear vision for the Stratford-on Avon District in 2026, to which the district can aspire. The strategy identifies that the district suffers from significant transport issues. Traffic congestion is common within the district and severely impacts Stratford and rural settlements at peak times. This has implications on air quality within the district as well as economic, social and environmental implications. Alleviating the situation will benefit Stratford and improve its attractiveness to shoppers and tourists.
- 3.58 In terms of rail it is recognised that the Chilterns railway line which links Birmingham and London Marylebone passes through the region, however there are no stations on this section of the line. However a number including Warwick Parkway, Leamington Spa and Banbury are relatively accessible to residents. The Shakespeare line between Birmingham and Stratford provides an important rail link for shoppers, tourists and students. It also allows residents to commute into Birmingham. This line is expected to be improved with the introduction of a semi fast service.
- 3.59 A further service links Stratford-on-Avon to Leamington Spa and London. To the south of the district lies to Cotswold line to London Paddington, with a station at Moreton-in-Marsh.
- 3.60 Section 5.4 of the Core Strategy refers to Improving Transport and Access within the district. Car ownership in the district is high with 86% of households owning one car, and traffic increasing by 11% over the past 10 years. However, over 6,400 households do not have a car and are dependent on other modes of transport.
- 3.61 Current provision of public transport services across the district is influenced by the distribution and character of its settlements. In some areas it is uneconomic to operate public transport, and there is a lack of frequent bus services in those villages not located on main roads or between larger settlements. At present only three per cent of residents actively use public transport regularly. However, the core strategy does acknowledge that there is scope to improve public transport within the district.
- 3.62 Policy CS.8 Improving Transport and Access, highlights the role which the Avon rail Link can provide in improving public transport and access to Stratford-on-Avon and the Long Marston site.

Section D of Policy CS.8 states that the District Council supports the delivery of a number of schemes subject on the outcome of an up-to-date assessment where appropriate. This includes a further assessment of the scope to reopen the railway line southwards from Stratford railway station.

- 3.63 Section F of Policy CS.8 safeguards transport schemes and associated land within the district. This includes the reinstatement of the Stratford to Cheltenham railway line southwards from Stratford railway station.
- 3.64 It is important to note that the Core Strategy once accepted within the council will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and will be reviewed within an independent examination. If this examination finds the document to be 'sound' the Core Strategy will be formally adopted by the Councils' Planning Authority.
- 3.65 In summary the Core Strategy actively safeguards to disused rail line south of Stratford railway station and supports its potential reopening in subsequent years and after the lifetime of the strategy.

Local Plan Saved Policies - Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan (Saved Policies) July 2006

- 3.66 Policy IMP.4 and Policy IMP.5 set out the infrastructure provision within the District. The policies identify the level of infrastructure required. The policies state that they will work with developers and applicants to assess the potential implications of the development. Based on the assessment of a development the local authority will identify a contribution for the improvement and study of transport infrastructure.
- 3.67 Policy COM.4 sets out the Districts planning authority's role in relation to rail provision. The policy will seek the retention, extension and improvement of rail services within the local area. The alignment of the rail line between Stratford-upon-Avon station and the current railhead at Long Marston is safeguarded from development for transport purposes.
- 3.68 These policies have been accepted through an independent examination which led to the formal adoption of the Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan in July 2006.

Long Marston Development

- 3.69 A key issue in promoting the Avon Rail Link is access to the former Long Marston MOD site. A recent planning consent has been granted that secures the permanent future of the industrial units on site, allows the development of 500 residential units and a leisure / holiday village complex. The site has a total area of 190 hectares with approximately 140,000 m2 of internal floor space and 180,000 m2 of external hard standing.
- 3.70 Existing transport links to site are poor, being based on local roads and infrequent bus services. Initial proposals for public transport include linking the site to Stratford-upon-Avon with a half-hourly local bus service. It is proposed to extend the "Greenway" along Station Road and provide a crossing to enable the Greenway to continue through the site to the residential element. To give some context to the public transport offer at Long Marston, interrogation of the TRICS database indicates that 100 public transport movements per 24 hours could result from a 500 dwelling development. Certainly, the local bus service has limited potential for residents to reach key commuter destinations and would be of limited attraction to visitors to the leisure complex/ holiday

village. Reinstatement of rail services on the adjacent line could provide a significant boost to access to the site and for resident access to key centres.

- 3.71 A section 106 agreement between the site developers (St Modwen Properties) and the District Council provides various funding streams for improving access to the site. Included in the package of measures is a time-limited contribution of £10,000 to a study to examine the potential for reinstatement of the rail line and through rail services. The release of this funding is dependent on match funding being secured from Warwickshire and Worcestershire County Councils, the various rail industry entities potentially involved and the West Midlands regional development agency (AWM). As AWM is being disbanded by central Government a success body would need to become involved. The agreement is time limited to three years following the grant of planning but advice from the District Council suggests that the agreement can be renegotiated to deal with the time limit and the AWM issue.

4 Rail Position

Introduction

- 4.72 The rail related background to this report and the associated case for reinstatement has been comprehensively made by the SLPG in its paper “The Case for the Avon Rail Link” published in August 2010.
- 4.73 “The Case for the Avon Rail Link” argues that the journey opportunities created by reinstatement and the benefits to Stratford-upon-Avon make a compelling case for further work to ascertain the full value of the reinstatement.

Rail Strategies

Network Rail

- 4.74 Network Rail currently maintains and develops the UK’s rail network. Network Rail’s strategic business plan for Control Period 4 (CP4) from 2009 to 2014 sets the outputs required and the funding streams to be used to deliver the government’s HLOS targets within the limits of the SOFA. Planning for CP5 had recently commenced with a scoping paper issued. The key driver in CP5 is likely to be the funding level set by the SOFA and this will lead Network Rail to make a series of efficiency saving proposals in the strategic business plan for CP5.
- 4.75 The relevant rail routes are managed and planned through Route Utilisation Strategies. Two RUS’s cover the rail routes which operate through Stratford District Council. The RUS’s which apply are the West Midlands and Chilterns, and Great Western.
- 4.76 The current RUS for the West Midlands and Chilterns was issued in July 2005 and supported at a strategy level by the West Midlands Regional Planning Assessment for the railway issued in July 2006. No discussion of the Avon Rail Link is made by either document although no certainty as to the development of the Long Marston airfield site and other developments in the Stratford area was available at the time of these strategies being developed.
- 4.77 JMP understands that the work on the under development “new style” West Midlands and Chiltern RUS has not included the Avon Rail Link in the options being appraised. However signalling improvements on the Shakespeare line between Tyseley Junction and Stratford are committed and will become live in November 2010 and will allow two train movements per hour improving service along the route. As part of this improvement Stratford Station is being re-modelled to improve train operations by giving direct access to platforms 2 and 3.
- 4.78 The recently published Greater Western RUS (2010) gives reference to the aspiration to open the Avon Rail Link and notes that current scheme to increase capacity on Cotswold Line would give sufficient capacity for trains operating via the a reinstated Stratford to Honeybourne line.

Franchise Situation

- 4.79 The current London Midland franchise that provides trains on the Stratford-upon-Avon to Birmingham line expires in October 2015 with final 2 years subject to meeting performance targets. Chiltern Railways have a long term franchise until June 2022 which can be extended further if Evergreen 3 delivers direct trains from Marylebone to Oxford. First Great Western whom operate

the Cotswold line have a franchise agreement until April 2013 with a possible 3 year extension beyond this date if targets are met.

- 4.80 The current government is conducting a review of franchising arrangements. A consultation on longer franchise terms design to lever in private investment is underway as is the “McNulty” review of value for money in the industry. Whatever the outcome of these consultation and review processes is it is clear that Government aims to seek greater private sector investment in the rail network and continue the previous Government’s policy of re-drawing the balance between public subsidy and the contribution made by the fare-box.
- 4.81 At this stage, given that re-franchising (in whatever form is developed) is someway off, it is clear that policy decisions on rail investment cannot be made in an informed manner until the picture becomes clearer. Equally, decisions made now that close off investment opportunities may lead to difficulties in developing schemes that can be proven as worthwhile in the future.

Chiltern Railways’ Plans

Chiltern “mainline”

- 4.82 The aim of the Chiltern “Mainline project is to deliver journey time improvements between London Marylebone and Birmingham. As part of this process a draft timetable due for implementation in 2011 has been consulted on. Key elements include lowering the number of calls at intermediate stations between Leamington Spa and London and a greater emphasis on shuttle trains to deliver the Stratford-upon-Avon to Leamington Spa service. This timetable, if implemented, would results in even lower connectivity for Stratford-upon-Avon to other key tourist destinations.

Freight

- 4.83 The Network Rail Freight RUS (2007) identifies growth in container traffic of 30% between 2007 and 2015. This equates to up to 240 additional trains per day on week days (including return trips running empty) compared to the base year of 2004/05. Whilst growth is predicted in the volumes of most commodities carried, the greatest overall level of growth is expected in deep sea (intercontinental) intermodal traffic. Some of this traffic will be on the Southampton to West Midlands axis which will require additional circa 30 new train paths. This additional traffic will, no doubt, require the rail industry to consider the strategic potential of alternative routes including the use of the Avon Rail Link.

5 Tourism

- 5.1 As an established tourist destination, Stratford-on-Avon has a number of leisure attractions. These are predominantly based on the Shakespeare theme, not least the two theatres run by the Royal Shakespeare Company; The Royal Shakespeare Theatre on the riverside and The Swan Theatre. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre has been undergoing improvements works. This world centre of excellence for the performing arts requires a continual stream of visitors to remain viable.
- 5.2 Other attractions include Shakespeare's Birthplace, Anne Hathaway's Cottage on the outskirts of the town, the Holy Trinity Church where Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway are buried and the Guild Chapel and gardens on Chapel Street. Two museums currently operate in the town: the 'Shakespeare' provides a visual journey through Shakespeare's life and 'The Falstaff Experience' is based on the history of the town itself. The Birthplace Trust has proposals to develop a Museum of Stratford.
- 5.3 The Bancroft Gardens on the riverside in Stratford also provide an important leisure facility for tourists in the summer months. Stratford also has a number of leisure facilities for local residents. The Stratford Leisure Centre is in an edge of centre position in the town at Bridgefoot, and provides a large swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall and multiple sports courts. The complex is also home to the Visitor Centre. The Stratford Community Sports Centre also provides a location for team sports, and there are four private gymnasiums in the town. The Stratford Picture House is a small cinema on Windsor Street at the northern end of the town centre.
- 5.4 It is estimated that in 2001 some 5.5 million visitors came to the District – 4.5 million as day trippers, and 0.9 million overnight visitors – only 125,000 came from overseas, spending £28 million or almost 12% of all visitor spend. Previous estimates suggest that potentially eight out of ten (or even more) visitors to the district come to the town. There are approximately three times as many day visitors to the town as overnight staying visitors · £238 million was spent in the District by all visitors - £129 million from overnight visitors and £109 million from day visitors. This supports 5,700 direct tourism jobs and 1,180 indirect (non-tourism) jobs · Key target market sectors include domestic leisure short break visitors, business and conference tourists, overseas sightseeing holidaymakers and domestic and overseas travel trade (coach tours). Visitor surveys show a picture of predominantly day visitors, older (45 years plus) couples of higher ABC1 socio-economic classification. As these socio-economic groups are more likely to travel by either private car or rail to reach destinations of interest improved rail links to the town would be beneficial.
- 5.5 It was recognised back in the 1999 Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the District, produced by the Heart of England Tourist Board, that a problem for the town and district was that, "The good accessibility of the District has made it a popular day visit, rather than staying, destination with 82% of visitors coming for six hours or less and spending significantly less than staying visitors." The "World Class Stratford" initiative developed by key local and regional partners recognises that to remain a competitive tourist destination access to the town must be improved.
- 5.6 Given the strategic access potential of the Avon Rail Link and the ease of access this would create to other key tourist destinations such as Oxford and London the potential to provide a reversal of the day visitor trend is a key selling point of the "Avon Rail Link".

6 Justification for Inclusion in the new Warwickshire LTP

Introduction

- 6.7 This section of the report sets out the justification for the inclusion of the Avon Rail Link into Warwickshire County Councils LTP3. The Avon Rail Link provides a unique opportunity for the council to commit to a potential scheme which provides significant benefits for Stratford-on-Avon and the Warwickshire County in future years.
- 6.8 Through the review of policy it is envisaged that this scheme could be identified as a longer term project with the 20 year strategy of the LTP. It should be acknowledged that LTP3 provides a new structure to the way LTP's are developed. There are two elements, the first is a three year strategy, will identify short term projects for funding. Whilst the second element the 20 year strategy, which can highlight longer term schemes. It also enables the inclusion of potential schemes on which technical reviews could be undertaken when the economy recovers and conditions improved.
- 6.9 JMP recommends the inclusion of the Avon Rail Link scheme into the 20 year strategy. This will enable the safeguarding of a potential scheme that would provide significant benefits economically, socially and environmentally to Stratford-on-Avon and Warwickshire. Naturally, assessment of the costs and benefits will be required at the appropriate point in the lifespan of the LTP.

Transport Policy

- 6.10 The Avon Rail Link is aligned to the promotion of sustainable travel being promoted by the Government, which aims to improve accessibility to key services and facilities by public transport, as highlighted within DaSTS and PPG13: Transport.
- 6.11 The scheme will also contribute to the achievement of the identified DaSTS goals which are linked to the core objectives of LTP3. Therefore the scheme should be included within in the LTP due to the factor it can provide additional benefits to the councils' objectives and aims.
- 6.12 It is recognised that further work to produce a business case that reflects current rail parameters would need to be undertaken. The opportunity presented by the Section 106 agreement relating to the Long Marston would allow a definitive and informed view of the costs and benefits of a reinstatement to be made at Network Rail GRIP level 2 (pre-feasibility) and possibly at GRIP level 3 (option development) if funding allowed. The reinstatement offers a new set of journey possibilities for Warwickshire residents and would allow Southern Warwickshire to gain fully from the improved offer generated by the Cotswold line improvements being undertaken currently.

Land Use Policy

- 6.13 The guidance on LTP3 clear states that there is a requirement of consensus between LTP3 and the LDF process. Policy CS8 of the draft core strategy clearly identifies the support and safeguarding of the Avon Rail Link, based on further technical analysis and study. The current uncertainty in land-use planning policy indicates that options including reinstatement should not be closed off by policy decisions based on the current moving picture of land-use planning policies.
- 6.14 The continued safeguarding of the route alignment implies that the local planning authority recognise value in the transport related aspects of the route in dealing with the expected future

land-use scenarios in the District. The safeguarding has been maintained for a number of development plan cycles and given the current uncertainty over the relevance of various elements of the former regional spatial strategy a decision to “de-safeguard” the route at this stage would seem to be unlikely. However, safeguarding is an evidence based process and this leads to the conclusion that a commitment to make a definitive, up to date, examination of the case for reinstatement should be made in the LTP, if only to allow the safeguarding to be retained, pending the correct climate for delivery.

- 6.15 This commitment of the proposed rail link represents Stratford District Council’s continuing commitment to promoting sustainable transport, reducing congestion and improving public transport links. It also provides a commitment to the goals identified within the draft Warwickshire LTP3.

Air Quality

- 6.16 The Avon rail Link would also provide an indirect benefit for Warwickshire. Through improvements to the rail network within the county, traffic levels would reduce. This would have a residual impact on carbon emissions and greenhouse gases, by reducing them. Therefore improving air quality within county, and benefiting quality of life for residents and tourists. As well as reducing the levels of respiratory illnesses observed especially in built up areas.
- 6.17 This would therefore aid the council in meeting its objectives set out within draft core strategy and draft Air Quality Strategy.

Freight Management

- 6.18 It is currently understood that rail freight suffers from congestion along the Birmingham, Leamington Spa and Banbury section of rail track. This is predicted to become worse when gauge enhancement for 9’ 6” containers between Southampton and the West Midlands is completed by Network Rail. This line is also heavily utilised by Chiltern Railway, Arriva Cross Country, First Great Western and London Midland passenger services. Therefore the opening of the Avon rail Link provides the opportunity to provide an alternative routing for rail freight to the south towards Didcot. It also reduces potential delays which are experienced especially for rail freight companies.
- 6.19 In turn this will provide better economic growth within the West Midlands and Warwickshire through the production of capacity on the rail network within the area. In turn this also raises the potential to reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicle movements within the county. This will improve air quality within Warwickshire and reduce the congestion experienced presently.

Passenger Transport Management

- 6.20 Stratford-on-Avon is currently served by London Midland and Chiltern Railways. Chiltern Railways provide a link between Stratford and London Marylebone, with services stopping at Leamington Spa, Banbury and High Wycombe. London Midland operates services between Stratford and Birmingham with services calling at both Birmingham Snow Hill and Birmingham Moor Street. These services carry on to call at Smethwick Galton Bridge, Stourbridge, Kidderminster and Worcester.

- 6.21 At present tourists wishing to visit Stratford must change at stations such as Birmingham, Smethwick Galton Bridge or Leamington Spa for services from all parts of the UK. On many journeys this can involve a number of changes.
- 6.22 The potential opening of the Avon Rail Link would provide access to the Cotswold line to the south of the district. This would also enable greater number of passenger services to serve Stratford and link a number of historical centres directly, including Oxford, Worcester, and Cheltenham Spa.
- 6.23 This will provide Stratford's linkage to the rest of the country and reinforce it as a national heritage and tourist site. The improved rail linkage provides the opportunity to reduce the number of car journeys undertaken by tourists to the town. The implementation of the Avon Rail Link could provide significant improvements to traffic congestions experienced within the town centre, as well as parking issues. An indirect benefit is that the air quality within the town will improve, making the town a more pleasant environment for residents, workers and tourists to enjoy.
- 6.24 The development of Stratford Parkway station, whilst currently making slow progress due to the government spending review and the abandonment of regional funding mechanisms, is also a relevant factor in the potential reinstatement. The business case for the station is predicated on the operation of two trains per hour on the existing Birmingham to Stratford route. An extension of services southwards would bring additional journey opportunities and an additional market for the station. Although not comparable with Warwick Parkway the potential for southbound demand does not form part of the current business case, nor was considered by the 1996 study, but could make a positive contribution to the case for reinstatement.

Tourism Benefits

- 6.25 The reliance on tourism is a key factor for the long term economic viability of Stratford District. The potential for contribution of the Avon Rail Link towards this key market and economic driver is based upon the greater connectivity to other main tourist locations. The market for domestic tourists is dominated by the ABC1 socio-economic groups who have a greater propensity to travel by rail and to which a reinstatement would open up significant journey opportunities.

Long Marston Development and the “Greenway”

- 6.26 The Long Marston development is a fundamental element of the potential reinstatement. Retention of the link from Honeybourne has opened up the possibility of a reinstatement and the new planning consent has enabled the securing of funding to in part support a full assessment of the costs and benefits of reinstatement.
- 6.27 The Greenway currently operates as a leisure corridor on the former trackbed. Shared use of the trackbed by rail and sustainable modes has been shown to be feasible in other locations as demonstrated by the “The Case for the Avon Rail Link” prepared by the SLPG. Confirmation of deliverability of this concept would be obtained through the technical study recommended.

Recommendation

- 6.28 The body of evidence available indicates that technically the reinstatement of the Avon Rail Link is feasible. A full case for reopening would need to be developed at appropriate time and the relevant LTP-3 policy should support this. Given the County Council's transport co-ordination role

and excellent track record of delivering rail schemes the LTP-3 should commit to a full investigation of the Avon Rail Link. Naturally this should occur at an appropriate time in the LTP lifespan and relate to the land-use planning and other policy development processes, most notably those relating to rail franchising. The section 106 funding secured from the Long Marston development should be seen a positive opportunity for a conclusive examination of the operational potential, costs and benefits to be made.