

Re-opening Stratford upon Avon Town Centre

In the light of the Government's financial proposals for cycling and pedestrian schemes intended to help local economies recover from the effects of COVID-19, the Stratford upon Avon Town Transport Group (TTG) would like to support initiatives in Stratford upon Avon town centre intended to achieve this aim. The crisis is not going away for quite some time and it is crucially important that people are not just told that they must stay two metres apart, but that local authorities put in place measures that enable them to do so.

We are therefore writing to you, as the leader of Warwickshire County Council, to ask you to ensure that Stratford upon Avon receives the necessary financial support and that effective measures are implemented. We hope that there can be both immediate funding from the £250M available for simple pop up pedestrian and cycleways, and further funding from the £2Billion available nationally for putting in an infrastructure for cycling/pedestrians/buses.....

The TTG has recently prioritised 6 items from the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), (*refer Appendix 1*), that it wishes the Councils to scope up for early implementation. Most of these are not considered high cost schemes and it is intended to be a bold move to show how Stratford upon Avon is tackling the national directives of reducing pollution and congestion and improving efficient sustainable switch of transport modes.

It is vital to get the economy of Stratford upon Avon back on track and attract tourists and locals back to the town where we can provide a safe social distancing environment. Also, there has been a one-off significant increase in walking and cycling that we must capture and retain by introducing such measures discussed below. There is plenty of unused road space that could temporarily be made available for people travelling on foot or cycling. The few cars operating are also tending to be travelling faster so a safe space is important.

There are 2 schemes for temporary POP UP implementation that we think need to be put forward for bidding (these are in the TTG priority list). We have identified:

- a. **High Street** - Provision of wider pavements and cycle lanes possibly with a one-way lane for motor vehicles (from Old Town to Bridge Street). Such a scheme has in any case been discussed for many years as indeed has,
- b. **Bridge Street** - Provision of wider pavements and cycle lanes with motor traffic one lane in each direction.

Parking will be modified and or shifted for both schemes. A further option:

- c. **Sheep Street** - Provision as above (with one-or two-way traffic) would give an excellent loop into good pedestrian/cycle provision on Waterside.

These temporary measures will fall into line with our wishes of giving priority to people over motor vehicles in the town centre. From work done previously, they are eminently achievable quickly as low cost 'pop-up' schemes, and Stratford could be a test bed for this

approach. The 2009 Walkable Core report sets out most of this and could be used to inform both the temporary solutions, and any later conversion to permanent with minimum effort.

As restrictions are eased we believe these measures will be essential for the town to function, and will allow local businesses an opportunity to re-open while adopting social distancing.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown us that where there is a political will then actions can be taken quickly. Already local councils elsewhere are planning to implement emergency measures to temporarily widen footpaths, create new cycle lanes, restrict motor traffic on residential streets and create low-traffic neighbourhoods; all designed to open up space and enable people to return to some form of normality while socially distancing. There is no reason why we cannot do this here, and we are really hoping that you can ensure delivery in Stratford upon Avon too. This crisis presents an opportunity to think about things differently and it would be fantastic if you could help persuade the council to seize it.

Appendix 1 - Town Transport Group priorities to implement the Neighbourhood Development Plan/Stratford Transport Strategy

- 1. *Experimental closure of High Street***
- 2. *Widening of pavements on Bridge Street***
- 3. *Cycling – especially facilities for crossing the river***
- 4. *Birmingham Road improvements***
- 5. *20mph speed Limit***
- 6. *Access restrictions for coaches and HGVs***

Elizabeth Dixon,
TTG Secretary,
14 May 2020