

Guildford Society

Transport Group Position Paper

August 2017

Based on submissions in response to the June/July 2017 Local Plan consultation including material presented to Drop-in Session 15 July 2017.

1 GENERAL CONTEXT

reference documents:

- Guildford Borough Transport Strategy 2017,
- Topic Paper: Transport, June 2017 (accompanying Local Plan 2017)
- Local Plan – Transport Strategy 2017

Whilst the site allocations and proposals in the Local Plan – including the significant programme of schemes to provide and improve opportunities to use active modes, bus and rail – are intended to result in a modest modal shift over the period to 2034, GBC forecast that there will also be an absolute increase in overall traffic volumes, consequently we consider that remedial schemes need to be brought forward. See sections 2, 6 & 8 below.

2 TOWN CENTRE, OVERALL TRANSPORT-RELATED ISSUES

reference documents:

- Guildford Town Centre Regeneration Strategy January 2017,
- and GVG ideas presented on 1 Feb 2017.

We emphasize the importance of:

- i. tackling the need for a major improvement to Guildford's road system to divert traffic away from the Town Centre (TC) and
- ii. preventing the building of developments *now* which could rule out new roads/bridges in the future.

We therefore support the principle recommended by A&M and adopted by GBC: "Drive TO, not THROUGH Guildford". This can be achieved by:-

- a. Providing a diversion route away from the TC for vehicles, including freight, which have hitherto needed to access the gyratory.
- b. Adopting Park & Ride (P&R) charging rates to encourage use by both commuters at peak times, and by visitors and shoppers at other times. Additional P&R sites are needed in the north and south of the Town.
- c. Identifying as Interceptors, car parks with favourable pricing structures, on the edge of the Town Centre, provided with amenable walking routes to the shopping area.
- d. Restricting traffic beyond these to buses, taxis and permitted vehicles. The latter would include residents and those accessing pre-booked parking spaces in the central car parks, using Smart technology, as suggested in GBC's Parking Strategy.

These measures should be implemented within 10 years at the latest in order to allow the proposed Sustainable Movement Corridor (SMC) to function effectively.

We welcome implementation of the Borough's LEP-funded short-term Guildford Transport package (GTCTP), with seven projects as listed in Guildford Town Centre Regeneration Strategy January 2017, page 61.

Most importantly, we hope that GBC will eventually acknowledge the value of Guildford Vision Group's (GVG) proposal for a new bridge link between York Road, Guildford Park Road and Farnham Road as a major step towards a. above. We advocate immediate safeguarding of the route of the latter and the earliest possible implementation of its first stage, linking York Road and Guildford Park Road, not least because of the vulnerability of the old Farnham Road Bridge.

3 ACTIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT

reference documents:

- Guildford Forward Programme - Part A - November 2014, updated periodically for the Guildford Local Committee.
- Local Plan – Transport Strategy 2017

We support GBC's emphasis on encouraging Active modes of transport.

Although attention is focused by GBC on a package of improved facilities and the SMC, we are keen that key routes, for example, to the Cathedral and the University, are well-developed.

Pedestrians should have direct routes, on footways not hemmed-in by traffic. Wherever possible they should have due priority in a pedestrianised town centre. Their path should not be obstructed by road signs, parked cars or other detritus.

We consider that a safe pedestrian and cycle route from the railway station to the Town Centre is of particular importance and we welcome the proposed replacement of the Walnut Bridge. However we believe that its replacement between 2017 and 2021 may prove to be premature if its design does not take account of both expected development on the Bedford Wharf site to the east, and its relationship with any Railway Station development on the west as well as considerations for crossing Walnut Tree Close.

Cyclists should have “joined up” and continuous, safe routes, segregated wherever possible, to major destinations on cycle tracks or lightly trafficked roads. Cut-throughs should be provided from cul-de-sacs and provision made for cycling against the flow on one-way streets.

4 PROVISION FOR BUSES

reference documents:

- Guildford Bus Station (Arup Report), Update for GBC Exec 3 Jan 2017, and letter from SCC to GBC dated 20 Dec 2016.
- Bus Station Stakeholder Engagement, report to GBC by Systra, 2 May 2017.
- Local Plan – Transport Strategy 2017

We will continue to support the principles set out in the Society Chairman's letter to GBC of 18 January, noting the inclusion by the consultants of our Group's ideas for bus interchange stands in a limited-access Onslow Street, which could be made possible by the relief crossing proposed by GVG.

We agree with all points made by SCC (20 Dec 2016) who clearly, although joint clients of consultants, do not endorse their report, but require the following conditions:

- 1) *We work towards Bedford Wharf area being used as both the short term, and long term solution for layover provision, unless a more suitable permanent solution can be found within the town centre, or on its edge.*
- 2) *Appropriate infrastructure is provided as access/mitigation/enabling works to allow the closure of the two inner Guildford roads, of Woodbridge Road (south), and Commercial Road,*

and to cater for the necessary changes to the bus routes. These are not insubstantial, and could result in major reconfiguration of the town centre highway network.

- 3) *Appropriate alternative facilities being provided, both for the passengers, and the operators of the buses, and these could be on street, or within a widened street environment*
- 4) *Appropriate capacity being provided in the alternative facility, that allows for the projected growth arising from the Local Plan development scenarios, and from the investment in the Sustainable Movement Corridor.*
- 5) *All the passenger set down and pick up stops are located within broadly the same area of the town, to facilitate cross town journeys by bus.*

We consider it essential that passengers are provided with warm, comfortable waiting facilities with access to toilets, refreshments etc. and real time information on ALL bus services. Facilities should also be provided for passengers to travel short east-west distances e.g. between the railway station and G-Live.

All of the above could be achieved by means of a bus interchange in Onslow Street. We believe this unlikely to be achievable until serious reductions of traffic flows can be made in Onslow Street. Thus we wholeheartedly endorse the GVG Riverside Crossing. We have provided Systra and GBC with possible interim bus solutions with a passenger centre using the Bedford Road surface car park.

Since GBC's intentions are unclear, following publication of the Stakeholder Engagement report (28.6.17) we also demonstrated at the public Drop-in Session on 15th July the above ideas for interim bus facilities on the Bedford Wharf site.

5 RAIL

reference documents:

- Wessex Rail Study, August 2015.
- Local Plan – Transport Strategy 2017

We look forward to Network Rail's assessment of its long term operational needs for additional platforms at Guildford station and we welcome proposals to electrify, enhance and benefit the North Downs Line to enable improved Gatwick-Reading services, strongly supported by SCC.

The bringing forward of long-standing proposals for stations at Guildford East and Guildford West is very important, especially as they can be related to the Sustainable Movement Corridor - see section 6. below.

The Guildford Town Centre Regeneration Strategy 2017, includes work with Network Rail from 2020, but they should be encouraged to bring this forward once the outcome of the Solum appeal on their Railway Station application is known.

Meanwhile, we demonstrated at the Drop-in Session on 15th July the future of the operational needs of Guildford Station which we understand has been endorsed by Network Rail.

6 PARKING

reference documents:

- Parking Strategy (for GBC Exec 29 Nov 2016) & Parking Business Plan (for GBC Exec 24 Jan 2017) - (See point 2b. above)

We advocate changes to the P&R payment system to include opportunities for payment per group in a car to encourage patronage by drivers with family groups, commuter lift sharing etc rather than using town centre car parks. This option is available elsewhere.

The Strategy indicates that a P&R site around the Stonebridge Depot on the A281 south of Shalford is also under consideration, and we support this strongly.

All parking fees and locations must be integrated with bus pricing to ensure that travelling by bus can be lower cost and more convenient than parking in the town centre.

7 SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT CORRIDOR (SMC)

reference documents:

- Progress Update by GBC, February 2017.
- Local Plan – Transport Strategy 2017

We welcome this proposal to link town-edge growth areas at Blackwell Park, Gosden Hill and Slyfield, as well as Guildford East and West proposed rail stations. We will aim to ensure that these principles are adhered to. However we are concerned that this could not be achieved with current and increasing levels of traffic in Onslow Street. Thus measures to divert traffic will be essential.

8 The A3

A report by Highways England (HE) is awaited. We note that GBC has stipulated that the three major developments in the Local Plan will be conditional upon a significant increase in A3 capacity by HE. We welcome the late inclusion of provision for a four-way junction at Burnt Common in the Local Plan.

GBC has an aspirational plan for the A3 to bypass Guildford in a tunnel. This could then free up the current surface route for local traffic, providing an essential East-West link. However such a scheme would probably take some 30 years to complete. We believe that a solution is needed within 5-10 years to bring forward the early stages of the SMC and also for the likely need to re-build the Farnham Road railway bridge.

9 GROWTH IN OUTLYING AREAS

Dunsfold and Wisley Airfield.

It is clear that the proposed Dunsfold development is unlikely to succeed without major improvements to the transport infrastructure in the area.

We have advocated a new road link between Dunsfold and Milford with a P&R by Rail at Milford also serving the A3. This, in conjunction with the proposed increase in capacity of the A3 to the north, reducing significantly the impact of traffic along the A281 through the villages of Bramley, Shalford and even Compton, should be considered a serious possibility by SCC.

10 SCHOOL RUN

It is recognised that some 20% of the peak hour traffic, am and pm, is caused by parents delivering children to schools, often involving cross-town routes. A major campaign is required to drastically reduce this volume. Consideration should be given for schools, which do not already benefit from bus facilities, to be encouraged to make arrangements for children to be dropped off at suitable locations, such as P&R sites, or locations within walking distance, and then shuttled or "bus-walked" on to the school.