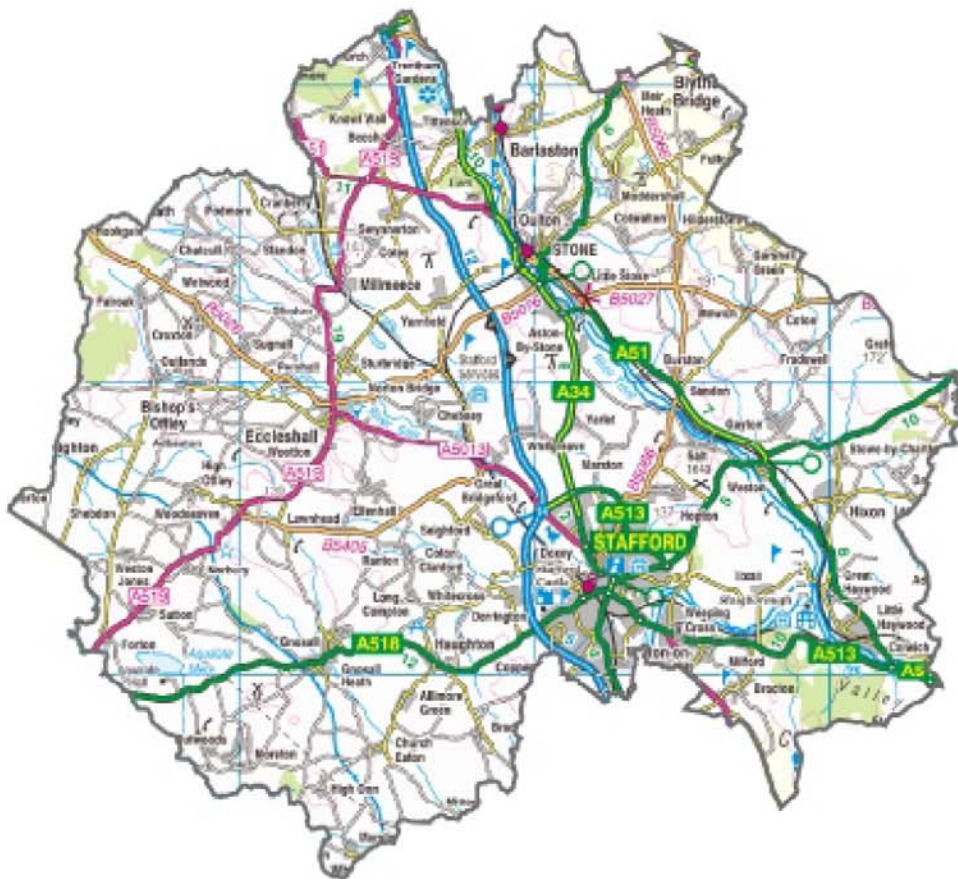


Draft Stafford Borough Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 - 2026



November 2011

DRAFT STAFFORD BOROUGH INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2011 - 2026

District Profile:

Stafford Borough is largely rural in character and Stafford is the main settlement that has a key role in providing services, facilities and employment opportunities. Although Stone and other larger villages provide additional local services, most settlements in the Borough and the rural hinterland are economically and functionally linked to Stafford. There are sub-urban areas in the north that have close links to the North Staffordshire conurbation. Development in the Borough is restricted by Green Belt between Stone and North Staffordshire and within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Stafford Borough has a relatively low level of deprivation and unemployment, and levels of prosperity are higher than national averages. Just two wards in Stafford have concentrated deprivation. Stafford has not suffered from the effects of the economic recession to the same extent as other parts of Staffordshire. However the town may be affected by public funding cuts, given its current heavy reliance on public sector employment. The Borough is relatively self-contained with 73% of the economically active population living and working within the Borough and 10% of residents either walk or cycle to work.

Stafford has good connections to the national transport network including the M6 and the West Coast Mainline. The A51 and A34 local routes also connect the Borough to the North Staffordshire and West Midlands conurbations and the A518, A513 and A519 provide links to the east and west.

A detailed and accurate analysis of the travelling conditions experienced by road users between September 2008 to August 2009 on key routes between Stafford town centre and the urban boundary has been completed using up-to-date local traffic counts, Department for Transport GPS Trafficmaster data and Highways Agency journey time data. The results for the 08:00-09:00 AM peak, 17:00-18:00 PM peak and Saturday (12:00-13:00) are summarised as follows:

- When comparing the 2 weekday peaks, delay is generally lower during the PM peak on radial routes and lower during the AM peak in the town centre.
- The Cannock Road/Lichfield Road route shows consistently high average peak hour delays when compared to other routes in Stafford. Delays of 9 minutes are experienced between 08:15 and 08:30, compared to free flow travel, and 6.5 minutes between 17:15 and 17:30. The Hough Retail Park and Queens Retail Park are located on this corridor which is likely to contribute to the delays experienced on Saturdays.
- On most routes, in particular the Newport Road, the greatest delays occur between 08:30 and 08:45. Other notable delays in the AM occur on the Wolverhampton Road and outbound on the Weston Road.
- The largest delays on the network in the PM and Saturday peaks are recorded on the town centre circular routes.
- Average Saturday delay is low on Beaconside, Weston Road, Stone Road, Wolverhampton Road and Newport Road.
- Although delays are experienced on most routes, good journey time reliability occurs throughout the year, although generally there is more reliability during the PM peak compared to the AM peak. (Reliable journey times can occur on routes that experience regular delays)
- The least reliable routes during the year are Newport Road in the AM peak and the town centre circulatory routes and Stone Road in the PM peak.

- Any issues of delay and journey time reliability along a route relate to the capacity of junctions. The only length of road in Stafford that is at capacity, regardless of delays at junctions, is Radford Bank.
- Serious delays on the M6 occurred on 10 days throughout the year. These delays are likely to have resulted in a significant impact of traffic levels on local roads in Stafford.

With regard to public transport, Stafford rail station provides frequent strategic rail services and Stone station is served by less frequent Crewe to London services. The Borough is also served by a core bus network of inter-urban and local routes, supported by community transport. Community Link Stafford and District operate a dial a ride service and two smaller scale voluntary car schemes operate for local residents in Gnosall and Colwich, including Little and Great Haywood. According to Census data, around 70% travel to work by car, which is higher than the national average, and 5% by public transport.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) Draft Core Strategy is currently scheduled for publication by Stafford Borough Council at the end of 2011. The Borough Council has confirmed that Stafford has retained its status as a Growth Point and is likely to accommodate significant levels of development in the coming years through a balanced supply of new employment and housing provision. It is currently expected that around 500 new homes per year will be delivered through to 2031, with the majority being in Stafford, and a large proportion of these on greenfield sites. The remainder will be built in Stone with a small proportion in the rural areas. Housing growth will be supported by retail growth and 8 hectares of new employment land per year.

A Stafford (urban) Transport Study is being produced as evidence to support the LDF. The study compares land use options in overall transport terms and includes traffic modelling to assess the strategic impact of likely development traffic. The assessment concludes that the most efficient way to increase households and jobs in Stafford is to focus the majority of greenfield development in the west and the north of the town, and a smaller proportion in the east. An alternative strategy would be to allocate a far higher proportion of housing growth to the east of Stafford. However this would require the provision of the Stafford Eastern Bypass which is a far more expensive and environmentally damaging solution, and based upon the evidence from highway modelling, increased levels of congestion would result. The Meaford Power Station site to the north of Stone and Blythe Bridge regeneration site are also significant employment land proposals in the Borough.

A broadening of the economic structure of Stafford town centre is required to support economic and retail growth together with the development of enabling infrastructure including the Stafford Western Access Improvements. Projects that will regenerate the town centre include new County Council offices, residential development, enhanced retail, leisure and further education facilities, and car parking provision.

Transport Achievements:

The Stafford Urban Area Transport Management Strategy (SUATMS) has been implemented during the period 2002 to 2011. Schemes totalling around £5m have been delivered through public funding and developer contributions of £1.4m. They include:

- Bus stop upgrades throughout the urban area and improved bus access to the hospital
- Rail station forecourt and access improvements
- Pedestrian crossing facilities and enhanced footways to the town and University
- Cycle routes between residential areas and the town centre and cycle parking

- Linked timing of traffic signals using Urban Traffic Control
- Junction improvements and traffic management on main radial routes into the town
- Town centre pedestrian priority and traffic management
- Variable Message Signs on radial routes and town centre car parks

SUATMS has helped to ensure that the private sector plays its part in delivering a planned transport strategy through the successful pooling of public and private resources. Major economic development sites at Prime Point 14 and Tollgate Park, Beaconside have also been accommodated without significantly increasing congestion.

Rail services have been enhanced on the West Coast Mainline making it easier to commute to the West Midlands, Manchester and London. Network Rail has also invested in a multi-storey car park at Stafford railway station and Stone station has reopened. Patronage on inter-urban bus links from Stafford to Lichfield and Telford has increased as a result of service and bus stop improvements. Many urban residents in Stafford Borough now live within 350 metres of a bus stop with a better than half-hourly weekday service. This is achieved through the core commercial network and County Council subsidised services. Many bus stops now comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Staffordshire County Council is also the national leader in discretionary travel allowance. A new travel scheme, adopted in April 2011, allows free 24/7 bus transport to people of pensionable age or with a disability, plus their carer, and under 20s can travel anywhere within Staffordshire for just £1 per journey.

Targets to reduce all road casualties have been achieved in the Borough through education, enforcement and engineering measures such as safer routes to school, local safety schemes and enhancing the walking and cycling network. Local safety schemes include improvements to the A51/A519 junction at Cliffords Wood and Aston-by-Stone level crossing, and progress has been made on completing the National Cycle Network from Stafford to both Stone and Newport, in Shropshire.

Transport Challenges and Opportunities:

It is expected that there will be a reduction in the amount of public money available for transport in the future. With this in mind, a key priority going forward in the next three years, and in the longer term up to 2026, is to make the best use of the existing highway network by focusing on maintaining its condition and ensuring that we continue to reduce road casualties. Wider economic regeneration ambitions in Stafford will be achieved by continuing to improve sustainable transport and managing peak hour traffic, making use of available technology. The aim will be to use limited public resources to support private sector regeneration.

In the short term, capital investment will focus on supporting the Stafford town centre developments including Gaol Square bus interchange. The challenge will also be to secure funds for the delivery of Stafford Northern Access Improvements in the vicinity of Redhill that will support key housing and regeneration sites. Throughout the strategy period, bus improvements will focus on making use of technology to improve service information and journey time reliability. With regard to the rail network in the Stafford area, further improvements are included in the DfT's delivery programme from 2013/14 to eliminate conflicts between trains and increase line speeds, specifically in the vicinity of the railway station and the junction at Norton Bridge. Local parking issues created by rail

commuters, specifically at Castletown, will be managed through appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders.

In the long term, a main challenge will be to deliver the Stafford Western Access Improvements and associated sustainable transport and traffic management measures for the town centre. Stafford Eastern Access Improvements will be required to support potential housing and employment development including additional highway capacity between Weston Road and Tixall Road, traffic management measures, junction improvements and enhanced pedestrian and cycling links to local facilities and schools.

The Local Development Framework may allocate a site for housing in Stone. Mitigation measures required to accommodate this new housing, such as junction improvements and sustainable transport links to the town centre, are expected to be delivered by developers. The completion of the National Cycle Network between Stone and Barlaston, and to the Shropshire border, will be supported as resources permit.

Road injury accident data will be continually monitored and analysed across the highway network. Locations will be identified where consistent accidents patterns occur that might be prevented through remedial engineering works. These locations will be investigated to identify the underlying causes of the problems and measures will be implemented if appropriate and justifiable. Local safety schemes such as junction modifications and signing improvements tend to represent good value for money, offering high first year rates of return.

The Divisional Highway Programme for Stafford Borough gives County Councillors the opportunity to directly input into delivery programmes. Councillors work closely with Community Highway Managers, parish councils and other stakeholders to ensure local concerns and challenges are identified and priorities are established, taking into account financial constraints. The Divisional Highway Programme is reviewed twice a year and gives an overview of highway and transport concerns within the local area, such as pedestrian safety, speeding through villages, on-street parking and the volume of lorries in rural areas. They are incorporated within the Integrated Transport Strategy if they require capital funding and are proven to meet strategic objectives. Other lower cost road safety and traffic management measures in the Divisional Highway Programme, delivered using revenue resources, will not be specified in this Strategy.

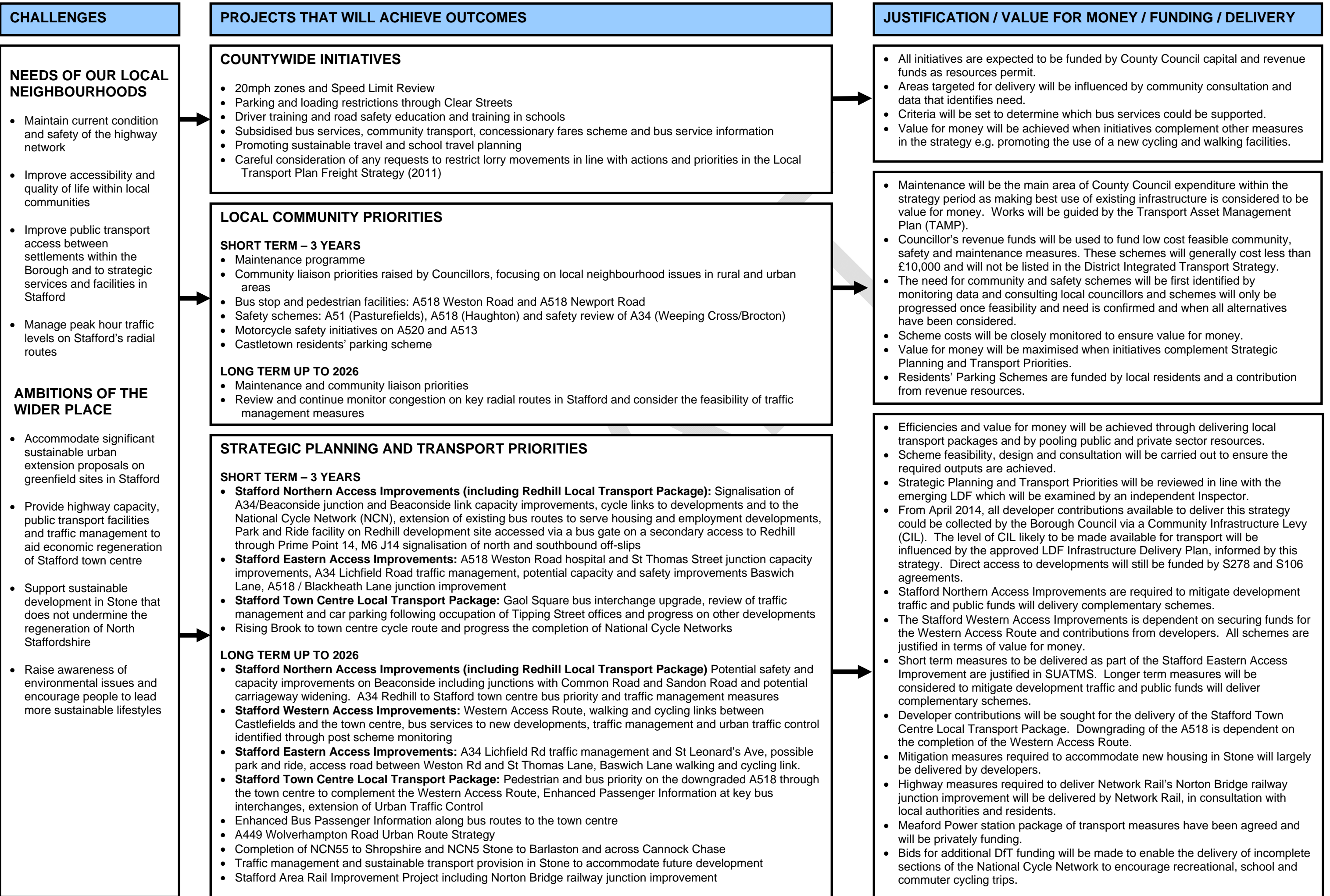
KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES

- **Pedestrian safety**
- **Speeding through villages**
- **On-street parking**
- **Volume of lorries in rural areas**
- **Safety outside schools**
- **Frequency of bus services**

KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

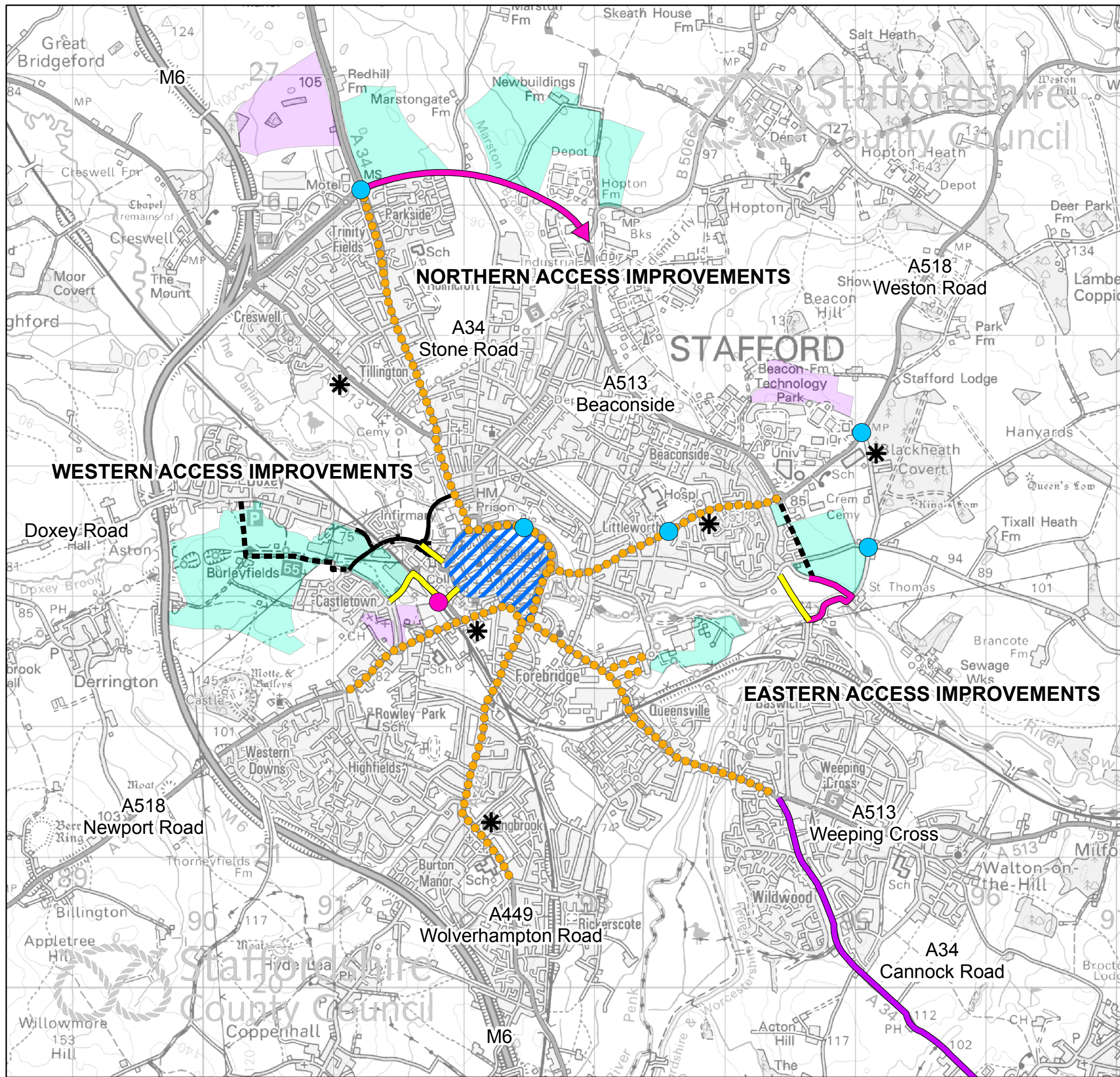
- **Economic regeneration of Stafford town centre**
- **Sustainable development in Stone**
- **Manage peak hour congestion on main roads in Stafford**
- **Accommodate major employment sites in the Borough**
- **Rail network improvements at Norton Bridge**
- **Deliver Stafford Western Access Route**
- **Highway capacity improvements in the North and East of Stafford**
- **Encourage sustainable travel**

DRAFT STAFFORD BOROUGH INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2011 TO 2026



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Stafford Transport Strategy



- Potential Residential Development
- Potential Employment Development
- Town Centre Local Transport Package**
Pedestrian Priority, Traffic Management, Enhanced Passenger Information, Car Park Review
- Rail Access Improvements
- Junction Improvements
- School Time 20mph Zones
- New Potential Access Road
- Stafford Western Access Route
- Traffic Management
- Speed Limit Reduction
- Cycle / Walking Routes
- Potential Highway Capacity Improvements

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