



A Vision for Stratford-upon-Avon

October 2025



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



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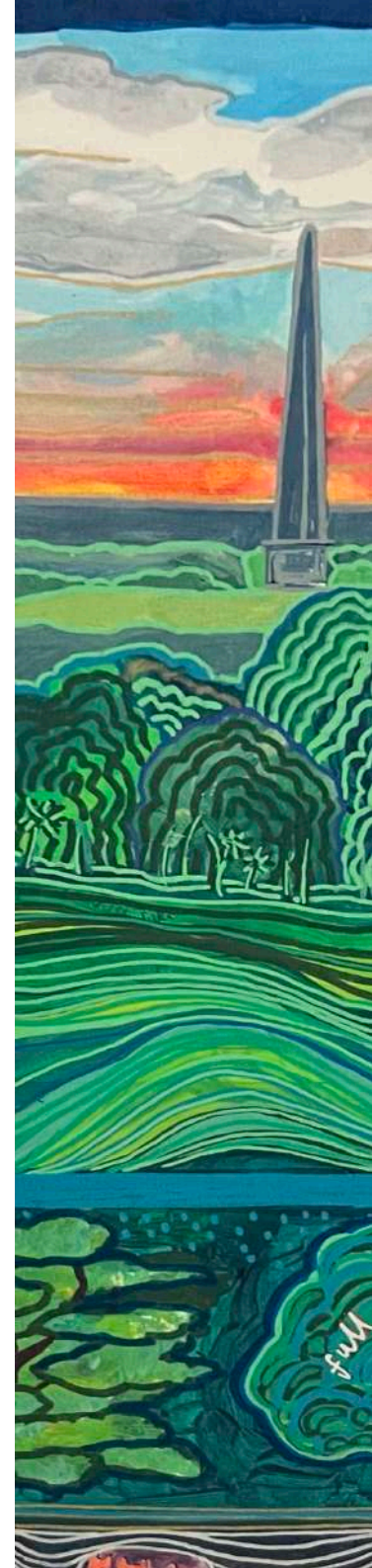
Welcome to Stratford-upon Avon

A world-famous market town with over 800 years of history, and a particularly famous son in William Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon spreads along the banks of the river Avon, within an hour from Birmingham to the north-west, 30 minutes from Warwick and Leamington to the north-east and under two hours from London.

Home to a population of 31,000 and one of the UK's most popular visitor locations outside of London, it welcomes 2.7 million visitors a year, eager to see the birthplace of England's most famous playwright and poet. For those who want to live, work and study here, Stratford's offer includes the historic sights and the world-renowned theatre for which it is famous, but it also includes so much more that attracts people to our beautiful town.

In the broader Stratford-on-Avon District the town's vibrant retail and hospitality industry sits alongside food manufacture, a finance and insurance sector, an IT and service sector, motor sales, engineering and building supply, boat building and farming. The strong local economy performs strongly as part of the county of Warwickshire in terms of business creation and employment.

Key organisations in Stratford are committed to ensuring a continued bright future for the town, a sustainable home for its residents and an unforgettable experience for its visitors. This Vision sets out how we will seek to achieve this.





What is the Stratford Town Centre Strategic Partnership?

The Stratford-upon-Avon Town Centre Strategic Partnership was created following the adoption of the Stratford Neighbourhood Development Plan to help oversee its delivery. A joint working group, its members represent the key public, private and third sector organisations in the town. The logos of those organisations are shown on the back cover of this guide..

The Partnership was established to consider what sort of town we are and want to be. How to protect what works and is valued, whilst also considering the changing nature of town centres and society more generally.

It seeks to improve Stratford's overall environment and ambience, identifying current major issues and concerns that will benefit from collective intervention, whilst keeping in mind at all times the various interests which together make

Stratford such a vibrant and wonderful place to live, work and visit.

The Partnership doesn't itself deliver projects. However, it influences the organisations that are responsible for delivery. The partners work together to encourage and support a thriving town centre that is relevant to both residents and visitors.

Meeting regularly, with an established way of working, the Stratford Town Centre Strategic Partnership endeavours to ensure that any scheme for the town is highly informed and joined up from an early stage. Through cooperation, collaboration and agreement this maximises its chances of success. The Partnership seeks to support a place where everyone enjoys a good quality of life - environmentally, economically and socially.

"The partners work together to encourage and support a thriving town centre that is relevant to both residents and visitors."





How we developed a draft **Vision & Strategy** and our **Ideas for Stratford-upon-Avon**

In order to create our draft vision for the town, representative members of the Partnership from across the public, private and third sector organisations, came together for a workshop. Facilitated by an experienced, professional moderator, the session explored a number of topics – Who is Stratford for? What is Stratford’s purpose and where do we want to go? Why do people love the town and what do we want to add?

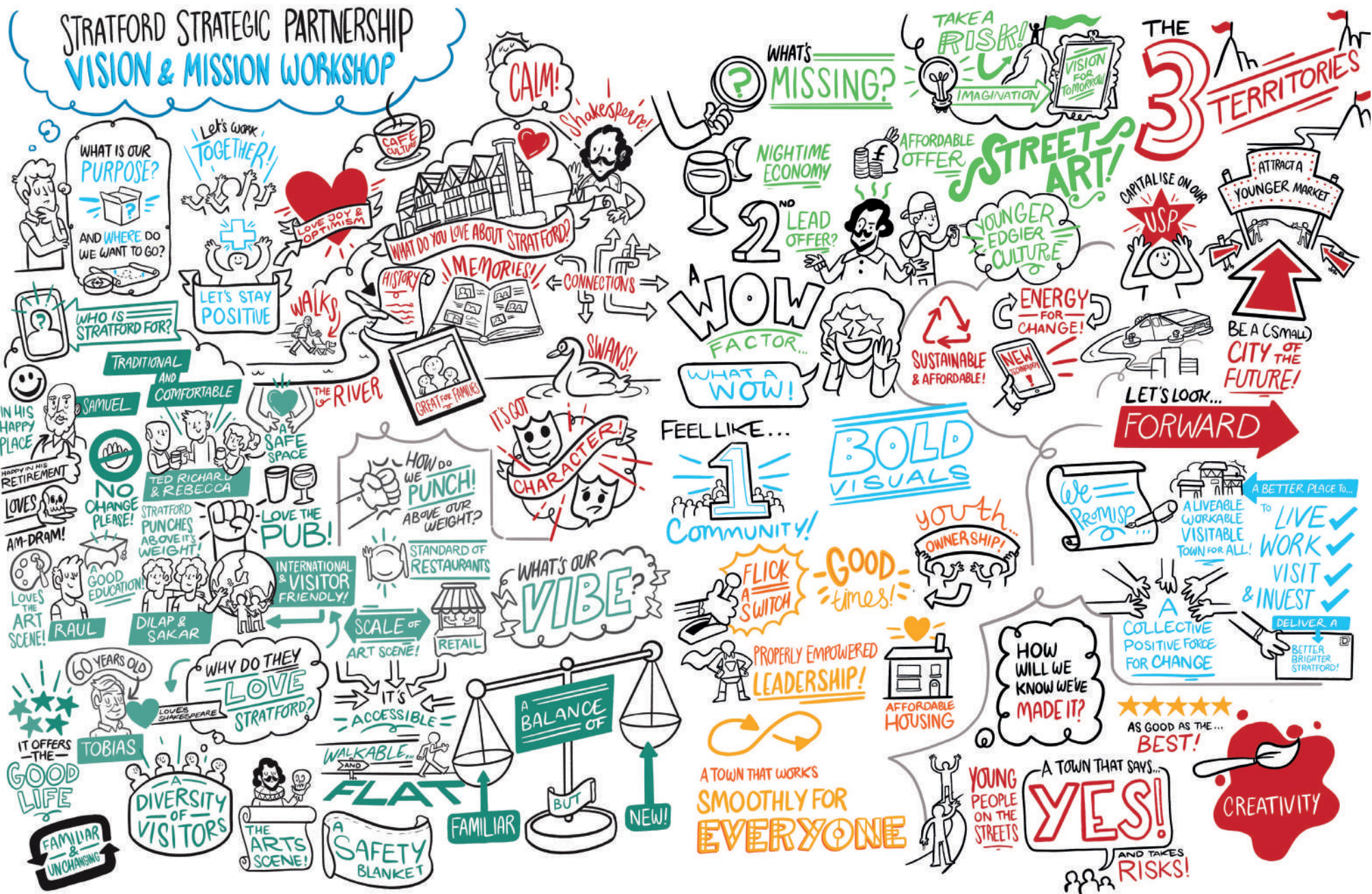
This first session not only allowed us to set out our draft vision for the town, but it also confirmed what the Partnership’s purpose or mission as an organisation should be.

Looking at different possible projects aligned to the Stratford Neighbourhood Plan, it established the four areas, or themes, we felt we needed to focus our ideas on to deliver the vision.

Four subsequent, similarly facilitated workshops, one for each of the themes, were then held with members of the Partnership, joined by representatives of other non-member organisations within the town. These sessions identified a long list of ideas to focus on. That long list was prioritised and the whole strategy reviewed multiple times to produce the draft you see today.

This is by no means the finished article though, it’s the first step in getting a broader agreement of what our priorities should be from across the community. We’ve started things off, but now we need to know what you think of it. A process of consultation will allow you to give your valued feedback.

“This is by no means the finished article... we’ve started things off, but now we need to know what you think of it.”



Our Vision for Stratford-upon-Avon

We believe that Stratford should be a town which:

1. Punches above its weight

We want Stratford-upon-Avon to retain its unique appeal and position in Warwickshire, acting like a 'small city' as a centre for work, life, and entertainment. Our future Stratford will be able to hold its own against the best in the country.

2. Delivers a fantastic experience

We want visitors to Stratford-upon-Avon to have an outstanding experience that makes wonderful memories. Trips to our town will excite, entertain and leave visitors eager to return.

3. Feels like a single community

Stratford-upon-Avon should work for everyone, regardless of age or ability. Our community will be inclusive and our town accessible, offering a great quality of life for all.



Photo: Sam Allard

Our Mission as a Partnership

To achieve this vision, we believe as a Partnership we must:

1. Provide a great experience

capitalising on our heritage and history, the wonderful natural environment that surrounds us and our rich artistic and cultural offerings..

2. Deliver for locals as well as for tourists

making Stratford-upon-Avon a great place for residents to live, work and study.

3. Show strong visionary leadership

ensuring that our organisations act in a joined-up way to bring about meaningful change.

4. Be willing to be bold

taking risks and saying “yes” to opportunities. By looking forward and focusing on the big picture, accomplishing great things.

5. Celebrate diversity

demonstrating a focus on inclusivity and accessibility for all.



A vertical illustration on the left side of the page. It depicts a large, gnarled tree trunk. A street lamp with a yellow light is attached to a branch. Several small, stylized animals (possibly foxes or rabbits) are perched on the branches and the lamp. The background is a mix of green foliage and a blue sky. At the bottom, there are orange and blue geometric patterns.

Four Themes to Deliver the Vision

Building on the concepts brought forward by the vision and mission statements, a further series of four workshops was convened to draw out what actions we needed to take to achieve our aims. Attended by members of the Stratford Town Centre Strategic Partnership, with additional guests invited for their particular expert knowledge, skills and experience, the workshops were anchored by our fundamental principle of evolution not revolution – bringing about change, whilst respecting what people already love about our town and protecting it wherever possible. So, new, but not too new.

Some work is already underway to build on the initial ideas, but they are now being brought to the public to ensure that the direction of future

development is supported by, and truly reflects, the needs of the people who live and work here.

Each workshop focused on a particular theme: **Town Centre Evolution; Creativity and the Arts; Great Vibe, a Fun Place; and Ease of Movement.**

Each theme will be explained in more detail here, along with specific suggested ideas that are intended to deliver them.

Of course, many of these ideas are not restricted to one theme alone and this cross-over potential provides greater opportunities to deliver our vision. Feedback is welcomed on all areas, and we hope that this wider consultation will hone our approach to developing and enhancing what our town needs.

“Initial ideas are now being brought to the public to ensure that the direction of future development truly reflects the needs of the people who live and work here.”

Photo: Sam Allard



Theme 1 - Town Centre Evolution

Evolve the town centre, respecting its history and beautiful natural surroundings, and act in a sustainable way.

Photo by Sara Beaumont (c) RSC



Theme 2 - Creativity & the Arts

Capitalise on our unique offer – deliver “Shakespeare +” to provide creativity and the arts throughout the town.

Photo by Sara Beaumont (c) RSC



Theme 3 - Great Vibe, Fun Place

Create a vibrant town with a more inclusive and playful approach – a multigenerational community with a great ‘vibe’ – a place that’s fun for everyone and is welcoming to live, work and explore.



Theme 4 - Ease of Movement

Ensure an ease of movement for everyone – maximise walking, cycling and public transport – a town that’s easy to get to and to get through.

Theme 1

Town Centre Evolution

This theme looks at how we can develop the town centre in a sustainable way, whilst respecting its history and beautiful natural surroundings.

We want to bring life back into the town by facilitating living above shops and offices, and exploring the use of interconnected community zones, each with their own identity, to encourage shopping, leisure, eating, meeting and recreation.

We hope to improve the appearance of our streets, transforming run-down shop fronts and increasing green spaces, with more trees, green walls and roofs. Central quiet spaces will offer scope for peaceful reflection, and time out from bustling shops and cafés.

Our aim is for a vibrant atmosphere which reflects our amazing heritage, whilst providing for modern living and a healthy economy.

“Our aim is for a vibrant atmosphere which reflects our amazing heritage, whilst providing for modern living and a healthy economy.”





Photo: Sam Allard

Our Ideas

Develop a town centre Masterplan - based on a series of interconnected community zones within the town, each with their own discrete identity.

Plant more trees - with more greenery generally, including green walls and roofs.

Encourage town centre living - bring life into the town by facilitating living above shops and town centre offices.

Facilitate a high standard farmers' market - holding a traditional market day selling affordable local produce.

Provide an indoor market area - providing offerings that are different to what is provided as standard on the high street.

Improve the dilapidated shop fronts - improving the look of shops that have no current occupants, prioritising those at the main entrances to the town.

Signpost and support the use of centrally located outdoor 'quiet spaces' - offer areas for peaceful reflection.





Theme 2

Creativity & the Arts

This theme seeks to enhance what we already offer as the internationally recognised home of Shakespeare, with creativity and the arts at the centre of the town's identity.

Fundamental to this aim is the creation of an arts and culture strategy, led by the needs of the community and visitors, which can support and promote arts and culture in the town. We are justly proud of our strong, Shakespeare-inspired theatrical heritage, and we want to see Stratford-upon-Avon as a home for art of all disciplines, with creativity at our heart and accessible to all.

We seek to encourage art everywhere, in all open spaces and open to all ages and abilities. This could take the form of creative play areas, visual art on buildings, community festivals and live music, with everyone encouraged to take part.

Through fostering community arts and supporting a thriving freelance artistic scene, we hope to make Stratford-upon-Avon a centre of creativity for the region.

“...we want to see Stratford-upon-Avon as a home for art of all disciplines, with creativity at our heart...”



Photo: Stuart Writtle



Photo: Sam Allard



Sara Beaumont (c) RSC



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Photo by Sara Beaumont (c) RSC

Our Ideas

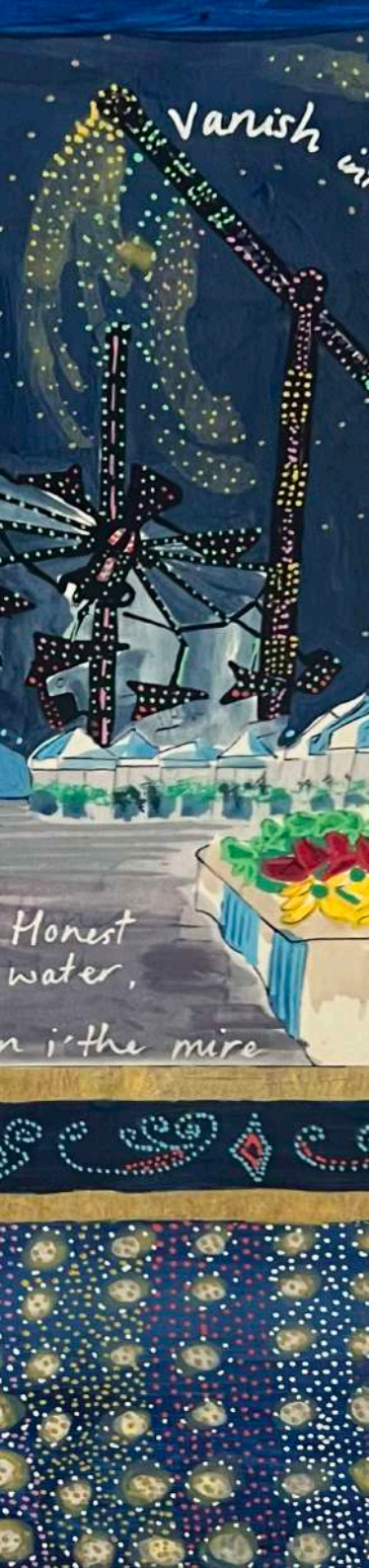
Create and deliver a long-term arts and culture strategy – led by the needs of the community and visitors to the town. Develop new ways of working to generate investment and support from national and local government.

The strategy should encourage art everywhere – throughout the town, open, empty, usual and unusual spaces will be used to host artistic activity. Creativity should be seen as at the heart of the town's DNA, not elite but accessible to all, so that Stratford becomes a town with a 'fringe' festival atmosphere.

Examples might include open access creative workshops, arts events, festivals, live street music, arts-based day and night events, fringe theatre, installations, creative trails and so on. Stratford will be known as a creative town where people make and enjoy art of all kinds.

Stage a regular large-scale arts event – of national significance, with all arts disciplines involved, something on somewhere, at all times. Close the town (to cars) to open it up (to the community and visitors). Encourage all residents to participate with every school child involved – a 'community festival of artistic brilliance'.

Establish a centrally located community arts hub(s) – where a thriving freelance artistic community can make, exhibit and perform in an affordable way. Where all can drop in and children are catered for – a 'festival in a building' involving all arts disciplines, with events and activities changing constantly, including a 'music hangout' for young people



Theme 3

Great Vibe, Fun Place

This theme explores what we can do to give Stratford-upon-Avon a more inclusive and playful community feel, multicultural and multigenerational, where all can afford to live and enjoy themselves.

Stratford-upon-Avon benefits from outstanding outdoor spaces and we should capitalise on this through the promotion of more outdoor activities, such as markets and street entertainment, as well as increasing opportunities to make the most of the river – both on the water and beside it.

Temporary 'parklets', pop-up schemes and an increase in independent food shops could boost the vibrant, exciting feel of the town, simultaneously making use of vacant retail spaces.

Places to sit and meet would encourage people to stop and watch the world go by, whilst late-night shopping, a tapas-style café culture, and after-hours activities and events will support the creation of a night-time economy.

To support our inclusivity aims, we need to ensure that spaces are accessible to all, with sufficient facilities to enable everyone to enjoy the atmosphere.

“...boost the vibrant, exciting feel of the town, simultaneously making use of vacant retail spaces”



Photo: Shaun Fellows



Photo: Sam Allard



Photo: Sara Beaumont (c) RSC



Photo: Shaun Fellows



Photo: Sam Allard

Our Ideas

Make best use of the town's outdoor space - with a wide variety of activities - outdoor theatre and events; street music and entertainment; temporary 'parklets'; places to sit and meet; farmers' markets or artisan crafts markets; festivals; specific features within the Bridge Street / High Street pedestrianisation scheme.

Facilitate a strong night-time economy - with a range of after-hours activities, including a tapas style café culture, late night shopping and a night club.

Improve the retail shopping experience - including encouraging more independent food shops, for example delicatessens, bakeries and fresh fish, meat and vegetable retailers.

Make best use of underused retail spaces with 'pop up' schemes - acting creatively and providing a variety of original and changing offers.

Review the quantity and quality of 'changing places' toilets and public toilets - and develop a plan to ensure an adequate number are provided.

Make even more use of the river - using its whole length, with increased on-water and by-water activities.

Build a world class 'not-just-Shakespeare' Stratford visitor centre - featuring the town's social history, making it experiential and learning from other similar offerings elsewhere.

Develop the new youth hub - providing greater facilities for the young people in the town, created and led by them.



Theme 4

Ease of Movement

This theme focuses on how to make Stratford-upon-Avon a town that is easy to get to and get through, maximising active and sustainable travel through increasing walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Whilst protecting access for those who need it, we wish to create more shared spaces, removing vehicles from busy streets where possible, and improving walking and cycling routes.

With a focus on sustainability, we look to provide more public Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points and better public transport options, encouraging visitors to use Park and Ride facilities in order to decrease pressure on parking and vital routes for residents.

Learning from successes in neighbouring towns, our vision for the future of transport in Stratford-upon-Avon is one where people can get to where they want to be easily, reliably and sustainably.

“...we wish to create more shared spaces, removing vehicles from busy streets where possible, and improving walking and cycling routes”





Our Ideas

Develop a multi-modal transport plan – whilst ensuring joined up thinking with building planning. Create 'shared spaces' and remove vehicles where possible, whilst providing viable alternatives to car travel. Ensure provision in the centre for blue badge users.

Facilitate easy walking and cycling routes – from key point to key point, for example from housing facilities to the town centre, to schools, the train station and the leisure centre. Create a pedestrianised core and provide more joined-up cycling infrastructure.

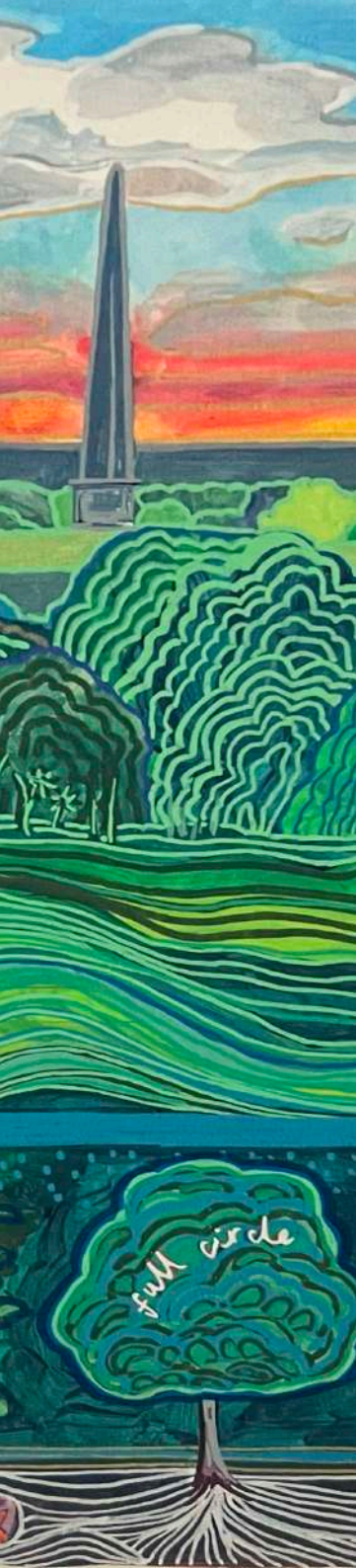
Progress the Bridge Street / High Street pedestrianisation scheme – breathe new life into this critical, focal area of the town.

Build a new bridge – at the same time, put a weight limit on Clopton Bridge to remove HGVs from the town centre.

Develop a joined-up parking strategy – 'outer' parking designed for long stays and day trips, whilst 'inner' parking is used for short stays. Increase the use of the northern Park & Ride facility and build a new southern Park & Ride.

Encourage more bus and train use – support regular, reliable services and easily accessible, live transport information.





What's Next?

We want the Stratford-upon-Avon of the future to be a vibrant and accessible town, with a strong community feel for residents and offering a warm welcome to visitors. It will be a place where people and businesses can thrive, where the arts are cherished, and the environment is protected.

A town for everyone, resilient enough to withstand any future challenges, flexible enough to take advantage of all the opportunities that come its way. We hope that the draft vision, mission and initial ideas outlined here set us on a path to achieving that future. Following public consultation, this document will be reviewed and amended to reflect that community

feedback. The challenge will then be to deliver the various initiatives we've agreed, to deliver our vision for the town.

With a document that clearly sets out the vision for the town created by the town we will be in a much stronger position to secure external funding and inward investment to realise our ambitions.

We will need to continue to work individually and in partnership to bring about that change. This strategy will be monitored and potentially refreshed as we move forward, to ensure that we continue to work towards providing the best Stratford-upon-Avon we know it can be.

“It will be a place where people and businesses can thrive, where the arts are cherished, and the environment is protected.”





For further information please contact The Stratford Strategic Partnership,
care of Stratford Town Hall, Sheep Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6EF. Tel: 01789 269332.

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