SECTION FOUR

STAMFORD

Stamford Vision is the established Town Centre Management Partnership for Stamford. The inaugural TCMP meetings were held in January 2000. At a very early stage in its inception, the TCMP established a Vision sub-group to identify a long term strategy for the town as a whole (rather than the town centre specifically), and the results of this group's endeavours was the Stamford Vision 2015[1] strategy document, produced by WS Atkins, and approved by the TCMP in March 2001.

Due, in no large part, to the visionary leadership of the then Chairman, Steve Zeller chairman of Newage, steps were taken at this time to establish a Development Trust associated with the Vision Group, to establish a Patrons Group of major stakeholders and to recruit a Partnership Co-Ordinator. The Co-ordinator was appointed in late-2001. Likewise the Development Trust was established in December 2001. Initially, the Co-ordinator post-holder was an employee of Newage, with funding contributions from SKDC, although this has subsequently changed, with SKDC being the direct employee, with private sector contributions to salary and on-costs. Discussions are presently taking place with Welland SSP about their future part-funding of this post.

The Partnership was re-structured into its present format in January 2003. This comprises the Partnership itself (termed the Strategy Group) and three Sub-Groups;

- **Urban;** focussing upon the environmental improvement of the town
- **Marketing;** focussing on the promotion of Stamford as a destination for day visitors and tourists
- **Business;** focussing on the creation of a balanced and vibrant economy in the town

The Partnership is co-chaired by John Plumb (Stamford Civic Society) and Shrikanth Padmanabhan (MD of Newage AVK SEG). There are two SKDC representatives on the Strategy Group.

Stamford Vision's achievements are admirable and the partnership as a whole is an exemplar of good practice. The level of private-sector commitment and engagement is strong and is a key strength of the partnership.

Key recent achievements include;

- Substantial funding from the Welland SSP for public realm works in Sheepmarket / Red-Lion Square
- Adaptive re-use project with funding from Welland SSP
- Feasibility studies (with SKDC) in relation to the Welland Quarter Opportunity Area

[1] Stamford TCMP: Stamford Vision 2015

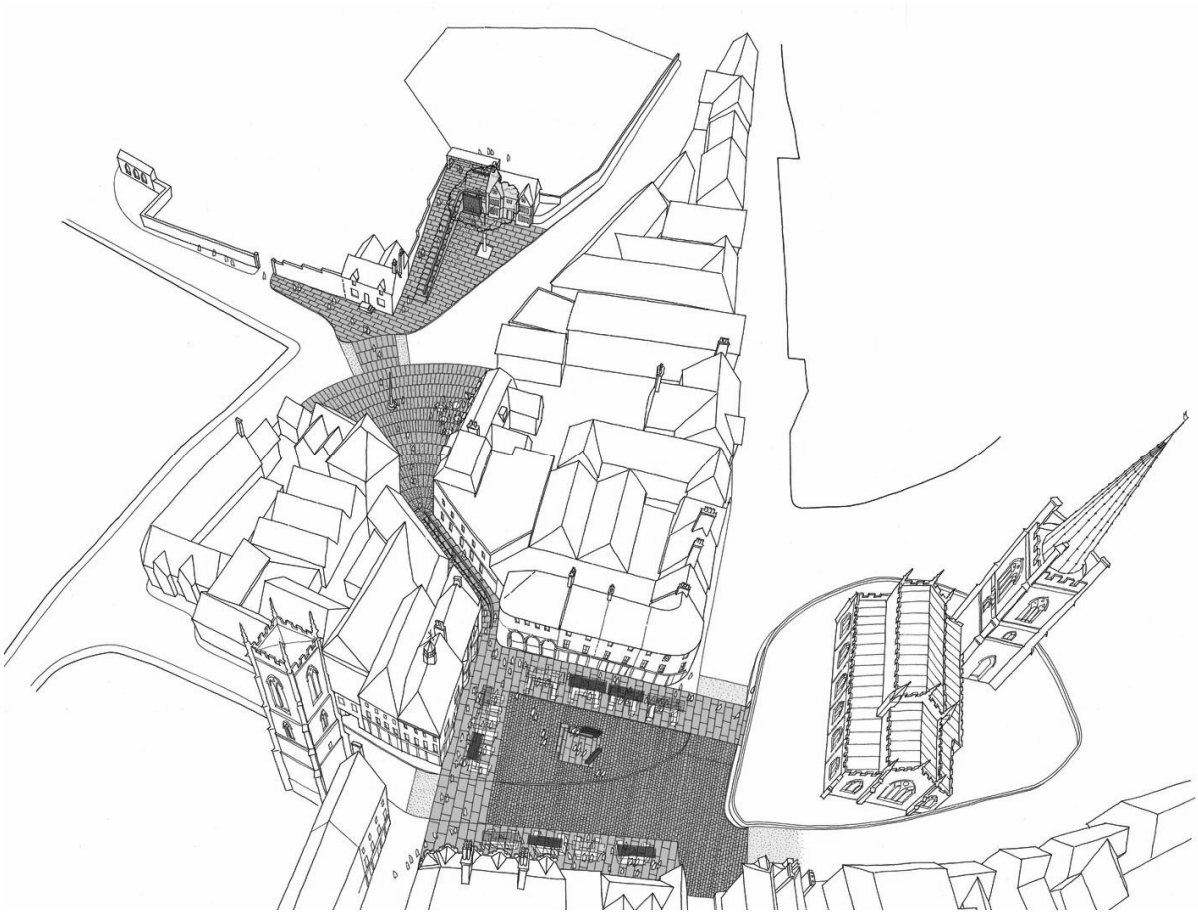

Figure 4.1 Artists impression of Stamford Gateway scheme; Red Lion Square is in the foreground

- Comprehensive programme of events during the annual Market Towns week
- Inward investment packs and business / footfall surveys
- Spring tourism launch and Showcasing Stamford event
- Tourism publications
- Street furniture installation and refurbishment

Stamford Vision has recently identified 5 priorities;

- The Stamford Gateway Project (Sheepmarket / Red Lion Square)
- Traffic relief
- Local Development Framework
- Welland Quarter
- Car Parking

Stamford Gateway Project

The Stamford Gateway is a comprehensive public realm improvement scheme for Sheepmarket and Red Lion square, key spaces within the heart of the town centre, connected by Horseshoe Lane. Working in partnership with national and local agencies, and through extensive public and retailer consultation, a scheme of public realm improvements has been developed. Stamford Vision has been successful ins securing significant funding from the Welland SSP for the delivery of the project.

Financial contributions are also anticipated from Lincolnshire County Council (highways). Provision has also been made in this Council's Capital Programme for 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 to support the delivery of the project.

Having secured funding to deliver the project, Stamford Vision have concluded that the establishment of a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee will be the preferred delivery vehicle that enables them to properly oversee the project. The District Council has supported this initiative[2], and would anticipate that the model developed in relation to Stamford could have wider applicability across all TCMP's in coming years. (NB. Subject to further advice, it is anticipated that the preferred company model will be a 'Community Interest Company'; the relevant legislation coming into force on 1st July 2005).

Traffic Relief

Stamford Vision has adopted traffic relief as one of its priority areas for action. The traffic debate in Stamford is a lively one, with different groups favouring particular by-pass or relief road solutions. Arguments for a development-led northern relief road have to a large extent been hampered by the absence of any strategic planning support for the quantum of development that would be required to deliver a project of that scale. Southern based solutions inevitably confront issues around impact upon Burghley Park.

Stamford Chamber of Trade and Commerce have recently commissioned a major traffic study of the town, and advanced detailed proposals for an Eastern Relief Road[3] (see Appendix 6) involving Links between Kettering Road and High St St Martin's, High St St Martins and Barnack Road, Barnack Road and Ufffington Road, and Uffington Road and Ryhall Road.

This scheme (the estimated capital cost of which, with an appropriate 'optimism bias' is £23.9m) is presently being evaluated by Lincolnshire County Council. The prospects of the project being entirely funded through the Local Transport Plan 2 process appear limited. The scheme does however, by integrating a number of existing and potential development locations offer the prospect of at least partial funding through development (see Appendix 7).

Subject to the scheme delivering tangible highways benefits, there is merit in evaluating the proposals from a land-use planning perspective as part of the emerging LDF process. That assessment would need to establish the viability and deliverability of the project, particularly having regard to strategic planning objectives.

As is discussed below, it is proposed to prepare an Action Area Plan for Stamford. Whilst initially this was to be confined to the town centre, there would appear to be some merit in broadening the scope of the document to embrace the whole town. This would enable the document to address this specific issue in a broader context.

[2] Cabinet 9th May 2005. Report DCS22.TCMP Structures
[3] SCOTC / JMP Consulting: Stamford Traffic and Highway Study.February 2005

Action Area Plans may be prepared jointly by adjoining local planning authorities. Insofar as these particular proposals extend into both Peterborough and East Northamptonshire, the possibility of a jointly prepared AAP may need to be explored.

Local Development Framework

Stamford Vision have identified the LDF-preparation process as one their key priority areas. The District Council wishes to work closely with Stamford Vision (and the other TCMP's) in the delivery of the LDF and its component documents. The District Council is working closely with Stamford Vision on a number of projects that will feed into the LDF process, and the wish is that this joint working will continue.

Stamford Action Area Plan

The approved Local Development Scheme[4] anticipates the preparation of an Action Area Plan for Stamford.

Action Area Plans (AAP's) are intended to be used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. A key feature of an Action area Plan will be a focus upon implementation. PPS12[5] advises that AAP's should;

- Deliver planned growth areas
- Stimulate regeneration
- Protect areas particularly sensitive to change
- Resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures
- Focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives

Whilst initially contemplated as a town-centre specific document, it is considered that there is now merit in taking a broader approach, including the whole town. Current evaluation work such as the car parking strategy review, the Welland Quarter appraisal (see below), together with the evaluation of the Eastern Relief Road proposals are all potentially interlinked. As such, it would seem to be appropriate to draw these issues together into one holistic document; a town-wide Action Area Plan. Budgetary provision has been made to advance this document during the current financial year, although it is not anticipated that the work would be completed during the present budget year.

Welland Quarter

The Welland Quarter is a significant tract of land bounded by Albert Road to the west, Wharf Road, Adelaide Street and Priory Road to the north, the River Welland to the south, and extending eastwards as far as St Leonard's Priory and the Morrison's roundabout to the east. It has a site area of approximately 12ha, and comprises a mix of largely brownfield uses, together with open meadowland.

[4] Cabinet 9th May 2005 Report PLA498.Local development Scheme
[5] Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. ODPM.2004

The site was identified within the Deposit Draft South Kesteven Local Plan, published in January 2002, as an 'Opportunity Area'. Opportunity Areas were described in the plan as follows;

> "…….potential locations within and on the edge of town centres where single or mixed use development could provide important facilities and activities to raise the offers of these centres to both local residents and visitors.
>
> The redevelopment of these areas must not take place in isolation but be seen as an element in the strategy which contributes towards the success of the centre as a whole. It is important that they do not operate as locations separate from the rest of the town centre, but have high quality inks to other parts of the centre.
>
> The Opportunity Areas all have substantial potential, but in many instances are complex and likely to involve a number of different property owners. Delivering development will not be easy and is likely to occur over the medium to long term. The District Council will work closely in partnership with developers and landowners and will consider using its land assembly powers to achieve the successful regeneration of these areas in accordance with Plan policies."

More specifically in connection with the Welland Quarter proposed allocation, the plan stated;

> "This is a very large area of about 12 hectares situated between Wharf Road and the River Welland, extending eastward from The Bridge almost as far as the Priory.
>
> The area currently contains a large number of uses including a public car park and various commercial businesses, utility services, allotments, pasture land and housing, some of which is of recent construction. Clearly, some of these will need to be retained, but the relocation of others will be necessary in order to achieve a comprehensive development in place of the somewhat uncoordinated piecemeal approach that is currently taking place and failing to deliver the necessary integration with the rest of the site, or a unified scheme.
>
> The area's close proximity to the main town centre shopping area offers an excellent opportunity for a high quality mixed use development containing quality new retail floorspace, leisure facilities, housing and enhanced public car parking.
>
> Despite its prominent location, little advantage is taken of the area's riverside setting. Although recent housing development has taken place right up to the river's edge, the creation of a route for pedestrians and cyclists along the length of the new river frontage will be required as part of any scheme to create an attractive recreational feature. This should be achieved in a way which protects and enhances the riverside and provide links between the centre, The Bridge and The Priory, through to Morrison's superstore."

Although the Deposit Draft Local Plan has now had to be withdrawn because of the implementation of the LDF system, the commitment to evaluate and support the development of this area remains.

Working in partnership with Stamford Vision (and with funding support from the Welland SSP), two projects have been undertaken to establish the feasibility and viability of developing the site;

- **A traffic and highways feasibility report (May 2004)[6].** This study evaluated the traffic and transportation impacts of three potential mixed-development options. The broad conclusion emerging from this study was that it was feasible to access the site for development purposes.
- A broader **development appraisal**[7], to identify viable, and feasible development options having regard to overall development viability and identified needs. The broad conclusions emerging from this study (which has yet to be finalised) are that the site is capable of supporting a viable mixed use development.

The logical next step in the process is to progress to a Masterplanning stage, which could then form the basis of an appropriate planning policy document. There are a number of options in this regard; incorporation into a Town Centre Action Area Plan, or adoption as supplementary planning guidance in its own right. Fundamentally however, there is a need to create a planning policy framework for the site at the earliest opportunity, in order that the advancement of the scheme is not compromised by further piecemeal development.

Having established a robust policy framework for the site, a range of delivery options are likely to present themselves. This could for example involve some form of collaborative venture between landowners, or, an approach similar to that being followed in relation to the core-area in Bourne, involving developer selection, underpinned by local authority land-assembly powers.

The District Council owns land within the Welland Quarter area; namely Wharf Road car park. At this stage there is no indication as to whether the existing car park use would be affected in the future (this is more likely to emerge at the masterplanning stage). In this respect, the parallel activity in relation to a strategic parking review is highly relevant.

The District Council endorse the strategy being followed in relation to the site and the subsequent preparation of masterplan and supplementary planning documents (either free standing or as part of a wider action area plan). Appropriate budgetary provision has been made for these exercises and funding can reasonably be anticipated from other sources.

Car parking

Car parking has emerged as a key future priority for the town. The issue has many dimensions; location, quantum and pricing structure, together with the issue of de-criminalised on-street parking and residents parking schemes. This issue is clearly of equal interest to the District Council. The contamination issues at the Wharf Road car park are well documented[8], and the existing cattle market car park is allocated for housing development in the adopted Local Plan. The current Cattle Market lease will expire in the next few years. A further dimension is the underground car parking

[6] Turvey Consultancy Ltd for Stamford Vision: Welland Quarter, Stamford, Development Feasibility Traffic and Highways Issues: Feasibility Report. May 2004.
[7] SQW on behalf of Stamford Vision / SKDC (Work in progress)
[8] Cabinet 6th September 2004 ; Report LEG.167

proposals being advanced by the Stamford Chamber of Trade and Commerce at North Street / Recreation Ground.

All these factors point towards the need for a comprehensive review of car parking in the town. This has been authorised by the relevant portfolio holder[9]. The District Council proposes to work with Stamford Vision and other partners to come forward with recommendations to cabinet about future car parking strategy. The outcome of this review will inform future parking policy, the preparation of the LDF, and the Stamford Town Centre Action Area Plan, and asset management issues.

A working group of relevant stakeholders has been convened under the chairmanship of the relevant portfolio holder and it is hoped to conclude the study within the next few months.

Tourism as an economic regeneration tool in Stamford

Whilst tourism overall has been recognised as a low-priority (Z) service, it is similarly recognised that tourism activity can play a significant role in the economic regeneration of town centres, a point identified in the recent tourism strategy report[10], described more fully in Section 2. This is especially so in the case of Stamford where the tourism offer is regionally and even nationally significant.

Within the Tourism Intervention Appraisal, the following key priorities and opportunities were identified for developing Stamford's visitor economy. The table below also illustrates how these priorities can be addressed. As this table illustrates, the issues / priorities are largely based around improving the overall town centre offer. The issues are to a very large extent being addressed, or are capable of being addressed through close co-operative working with the TCMP, Stamford Vision. It is considered that these priorities can be addressed through existing agreed budgets.

> " Tourism is a vital part of Stamford's economy and offers good growth potential for the town. Effective marketing of the town to visitors and the continued operation of the Stamford TIC have a key role to play in capitalising on this potential. The improvement and further development of the town's visitor offer is also needed. The development of a bigger and better located TIC / visitor centre is seen as a key priority. Effective visitor management will be needed as visitor numbers increase."

Developing Stamford's visitor economy		
	Priority / Opportunity	**Action**
1	**Improving the street scene and cleaning up the town**	Cabinet have approved a Street Scene Action Plan[11], and this is in the process of implementation
2	**Addressing anti-social behaviour in the town**	Cabinet have approved an Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Policy[12] and this is in the course of implementation. Cabinet are being invited within this report

[9] NKD: 3rd May 2005; Report PLA.493
[10] ACK Tourism: South Kesteven Tourism Intervention Appraisal. November 2004
[11] Cabinet 10th January 2005: Street Scene Action Plan. Report WCS.5
[12] Cabinet 4th April 2005: South Kesteven District Council Anti Social Behaviour and Enforcement Policy. Report DCS.20

		to support the preparation of an Evening Economy Strategy
3	**Effective marketing of the town to visitors**	It is proposed to work in close co-operation with the Marketing Group of Stamford Vision to develop an appropriate marketing strategy for the town (see further below).
4	**Continued operation of the TIC, and ideally the development of a bigger and better located visitor centre / TIC operation in the town**	The TIC remains in operation. Discussions proposed with Lincolnshire Tourism and emda about the potential for enhanced facilities in the town.
5	**Further development of the town's retail and catering offer**	To be addressed through the Welland quarter project, and through the Action Area Plan / LDF process
6	**The provision of more public toilets**	New toilet facilities have been provided at Red Lion Square.
7	**Increased town centre car parking**	To be assessed as part of the Strategic Car Parking Review
8	**Improved coach parking**	To be assessed as part of the Strategic Car Parking Review
9	**New hotel development**	To be addressed through the Welland Quarter project, and through the Action Area Plan / LDF process
10	**Improved signing, information and interpretation**	Significant and continuing progress in partnership with Stamford Vision
11	**More town centre events**	To be evaluated, and if appropriate, developed in partnership with Stamford Vision

In relation to marketing, the Tourism Intervention Appraisal, makes the following comments;

> " Effective marketing of Stamford is needed to attract increased numbers of day visitors and coach tours (primarily to generate additional business for the independent retail and catering sectors), and mid-week leisure break business and overseas visits (to boost off peak business for accommodation establishments in the town and surrounding area). Businesses attending the industry workshop in Stamford identified this as one of the key things that they expect for paying their business rates. The Stamford Vision Marketing Group has been established to bring together business interests in the town to market Stamford more effectively. The Group requires support, however, in terms of funding, marketing expertise and manpower to implement marketing campaigns."

It is considered that these marketing ambitions are best achieved through close collaboration with the TIC, Lincolnshire Tourism and Stamford Vision. In view of the diminishing resources available for tourism activity, such collaboration needs to explore longer-term sustainability issues.

Future plans to develop the visitor economy of the town should also draw upon the findings of a 2003 Stamford Destination Benchmarking exercise conducted by Regional Tourist Boards[13].

Cabinet are invited to endorse the specific actions outlined above in to developing the visitor economy.

ACTIONS:

21. In conjunction with Stamford Vision prepare a Stamford Action Area Plan, having specific regard to the outcomes of the;
- **Strategic review of car parking in Stamford**
- **The outcomes of the Welland Quarter development appraisal**
- **Technical and land-use appraisal of the Stamford Eastern Relief Road traffic proposals**

22. Welcome the Stamford Chamber of Trade & Commerce's Eastern Relief Road proposals as a contribution to the traffic debate and support its appraisal from a land-use planning perspective as part of the LDF / Action Area Plan process, subject to technical support for the scheme from the relevant highways authorities.

23. Develop appropriate supplementary planning guidance in relation to the Welland Quarter, promoting a comprehensive redevelopment, and resisting piecemeal development activity.

24. Implement the action points outlined in this section to develop the visitor economy of Stamford, and address issues arising from the Heart of England Stamford Destination benchmarking Survey 2003

[13] Heart of England Tourist Board: Stamford Destination Benchmarking Survey 2003