

## Transport for West Midlands Planning Group

<b>Date</b>	5 February 2024
<b>Report title</b>	New Stations Assessment Update and Recommendations
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<b>Report has been considered by (*)</b>	

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

#### The Transport for West Midlands Planning Group is recommended to:

- a. note the findings of this report
- b. provide approval in principle for further work being undertaken on potential new stations at Castle Bromwich, Coventry East and Tettenhall utilising the allocated funding for Rail Development within the CRSTS programme.

#### 1. Purpose

To update the TfWM Planning Group on phase 2 of the assessment of the case for further new railway stations in the TfWM area.

To seek endorsement for a Programme Business Case application to release funding for Castle Bromwich, Coventry East and Tettenhall to unlock the £1m CRSTS funding already allocated for station development work.

#### 2. Background - Phase 1 New Stations Assessment 2022

In 2022 TfWM/WMRE commissioned Mott MacDonald to undertake a study to assess the potential case for developing new stations at 15 locations within the TfWM area including those in the WMCA's Mayor's independently produced "2040 Vision for Rail and Metro".



The first phase assessment considered which stations had a strong, medium or weak case for undertaking further work, and concluded as shown below:

<b>Strong Case for Further Work</b>	
<b>Coventry East (Binley/Willenhall)</b>	High complexity project with major deliverability challenges, but potentially provides strong benefits when post-HS2 released capacity supports train service.
<b>Balsall Heath</b>	Potentially delivers strong local benefits, but requires delivery of Midlands Rail Hub to support train service into Moor Street
<b>Foleshill</b>	Potentially delivers local benefits, but train service is limited to hourly until network capacity enhanced at Coventry
<b>Castle Bromwich</b>	Plugs a significant gap in local rail service provision in East Birmingham, but services will be limited until MRH delivers additional capacity
<b>Medium Case for Further Work</b>	
<b>Tettenhall</b>	Reasonable potential to provide station and services, but strategic case for a rail-based solution needs demonstrating
<b>Streetly</b>	Station has major environmental challenges and weak standalone case. Dependent on a wider Sutton Park Line scheme following Midlands Rail Hub
<b>Sutton Coldfield Town</b>	Station has some deliverability issues, but is dependent on demonstrating wider case for Sutton Park line services post Midlands Rail Hub
<b>Walmley</b>	Station has relatively weak individual case, but needs to be considered as part of any wider business case for Sutton Park line post Midlands Rail Hub
<b>Minworth</b>	Station has reasonably strong strategic fit linked to Langley Sustainable Urban Extension, but catchment has potential overlap with Castle Bromwich and is dependent on wider Sutton Park Line Scheme
<b>Fort Parkway</b>	Needs further work to demonstrate that rail is the best mode to address transport issues in area, and delivery challenges exist for both station and services
<b>Warwick University/Coventry South</b>	Case for station needs to be linked to emerging development plans. Difficult to deliver credible service without track doubling.
<b>Weak Case for Further Work</b>	
<b>Coundon Road</b>	Strategic case for station is weak due to proximity to city centre and overlap with catchments of both Foleshill and Coventry stations.
<b>Brownhills and Pelsall</b>	Major delivery issues exist with need to reinstate rail line between Walsall and Lichfield. Potential benefits are highly unlikely to justify the significant costs. Other transport solutions should be considered before heavy rail.
<b>Dudley Road</b>	While station has potentially strong strategic fit, there are major delivery issues for both station and services. Other transport solutions need to be considered first.

Many of the projects are dependent on other interventions happening on the rail network in order to provide the capability to operate a credible rail service. e.g.

- **Midlands Rail Hub:** Balsall Heath and the Sutton Park line stations
- **HS2 Phase 1:** Coventry East

### 3. New Stations Second Phase Strategic Assessment 2023

Based on the Phase 1 findings, further strategic assessment work was commissioned for the following locations: Balsall Heath, Castle Bromwich, Coventry East, Foleshill and Tettenhall.

Brinsford Parkway was also considered as part of this assessment at request of Wolverhampton City Council and Staffordshire County Council, who had previously completed a Strategic Outline Business Case for a station at his location.

For each shortlisted location, strategic assessments have explored relevant socio-economic and environmental data to determine the strength of the 'case for change' in each area. While these strategic assessments will be DfT business case compliant, they are not full Strategic Outline Cases (SOCs) at this stage, with the:

- Focus on Strategic Dimension content, the majority of which will be completed as part of these 'Strategic Assessments', but will require updates and consistency checks when, or if, the wider SOC is developed; and
- Remaining Dimensions (Economic, Financial, Commercial, and Management) being drafted as part of the SOC.

Critically, the Second Phase assessments have been multi-modal in scope and, where appropriate, recommendations prioritise alternative solutions to a rail station option.

Key interfaces and interdependencies for all options are considered and, in the case of rail, both short and longer term train service specifications have been identified.

The strength of the 'case for change' for connectivity enhancements based on identified problems at each potent station location has been assessed and optimum solutions proposed.

**The overall conclusions of the second phase assessment are as follows**

Location	Optimal Solution
<b>Strong Case for Further Rail Development Work</b>	
<b>Castle Bromwich</b>	<b>New Station (need to determine pre-MRH service feasibility)</b>
<b>Coventry East</b>	<b>New Station (post HS2 Phase 1 – early 2030s)</b>
<b>Tettenhall</b>	<b>New Station or Bus Enhancements TBC</b>
<b>Weak Case for Further Rail Development Work</b>	
<b>Balsall Heath</b>	Bus / Active Travel Enhancements (option to revisit post-MRH, noting deliverability challenges)
<b>Foleshill</b>	Bus Enhancements (option to revisit rail if 2 tph Coventry - Nuneaton service introduced)
<b>Brinsford</b>	Bus Enhancements (option to revisit rail if significant developments in area materialise)

#### **4. Financial Implications**

It is proposed to further progress the options for new stations at Castle Bromwich, Coventry East and Tettenhall towards a Programme Business Case to allow for the draw down of the £1M of CRSTS funding allocated to the development of new stations.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

None

#### **6. Impact on Delivery of Strategic Transport Plan**

These potential new stations are all in areas with an absence of rapid public transport links and with high levels of deprivation with the catchment areas.

They are also highlighted as potential new station locations in the 2023 West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy.

#### **7. Equalities Implications**

The new stations have the potential to address issues of inequality through providing improved access to education, employment, healthcare and other services.

#### **8. Inclusive Growth Implications**

Each new station has the potential to support Inclusive Growth and this will continue to be considered in any further development work.

#### **9. Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

The catchment areas in Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Staffordshire are relevant to the potential station locations.

#### **10. Other Implications**

#### **11. Schedule of Background Papers**

Appendix 1: Summaries of Phase 2 Assessment of Potential New Station Locations

## Appendix 1: Executive Summaries of the Phase 2 Assessment of Potential Station Locations

### Castle Bromwich

Given the nature of challenges in the area, and the need to fill a gap in medium to longer distance connectivity and accessibility, a potential new station for the Castle Bromwich area has been identified as the best performing option. This finding is based on being able to provide a 2 trains per hour (tph) service, making it sufficiently attractive and competitive with the private car. With a relatively high frequency bus network already in place, incremental enhancements to existing bus services will struggle to provide a meaningful change against project objectives (due to journey times and reliability).

While a new rail station scores well against the overarching project level objectives, there will be deliverability and feasibility challenges which could constrain the benefits which can be realised. Firstly, a 2tph is considered the desired minimum level of service for an attractive offer. This would require stops on both Birmingham to Leicester and Nottingham services. This may not be feasible prior to the Midlands Rail Hub and may also impose significant disbenefits to the 'through' markets. Secondly, the potential station site, adjacent to the A452 is not well placed for place-making as a gateway to the surrounding communities, and prevailing land uses and severance effects also inhibit the potential by adversely impacting on first and last miles. Thirdly, the identified P&R potential will also have land use requirements, and there will be associated availability and access requirements. Realising the full potential of a new station may therefore require a much wider package than the station delivery itself.

Consequently, for a future SOC, continued consideration of bus-based enhancements, should be retained for a Strategic Outline Case (SOC), alongside a 1 tph rail service.

The next steps for the project should therefore be:

A complete Strategic Outline Case (SOC), inclusive of economic, financial, commercial, and management dimensions

- A station masterplan, e.g. RIBA 0 (Zero) early stage, which identifies the feasibility of delivering on the place-making and potential P&R components of the project, extending to first/last miles and how severance can be overcome
- Early Network Rail Engineering Stage (ES) output definition and feasibility works for critical components around operations, civil engineering, signalling etc.

These outputs can collectively inform a 'Decision to Develop' gateway consistent with the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) and WMCA assurance frameworks.

The Medium Run (MR) potential for the station to be served by Sutton Park Line (SPL) services (if a case for these can be made post- Midlands Rail Hub) is noted but should not be integral to this next stage of future works which will fully establish the case for investment and the feasibility and cost of delivering the full works which will be required to realise the intended benefits.

## Coventry East (Binley/Willenhall / A46 Parkway)

Given the nature of the challenges and issues in the area, and the growing opportunities, a new rail station with provision of longer distance 'strategic' services has been identified as the best performing option as it fulfils the project objectives to the greatest extent. It can also deliver the greatest change in accessibility and connectivity across multiple needs from residents and businesses in the area. However, its delivery, and the realisation of potential benefits, is not without challenges.

The proposal for the new station now requires further development through both the business case and design workstreams, which would be a combination of:

- A 'complete' Strategic Outline Case (SOC), building on this strategic assessment to provide proportionate outputs for the economic, financial, commercial, and management dimensions. This would include demand forecasting and economic appraisal informed by initial investment cost estimates. Highway access proposals would need to be considered at this early stage, and design and modelling could be advanced as a separate workstream;
- Feasibility and design development to the equivalent of Network Rail's Engineering Stage 2 (ES2), providing inputs to the initial investment cost estimates. This will include consideration of the cost and complexity associated with any turn back facilities in relation to potential new local services.
- Planning considerations would be incorporated or could be advanced early as a standalone workstream given the known challenges;
- Further work and assessment of local vs strategic station to determine the extent of benefits associated with a local station primarily intending to service the communities of Binley and Willenhall, but with connecting bus services (and possibly VLR in the long term) providing orbital connections to Ansty Park, Hospital, Binley employment sites, JLR/Whitley South; and
- Initial designs for the station based on its likely role and associated facilities. This could be through the above workstreams or via separate RIBA processes.

The next stage of any business case development should examine whether a local station primarily intending to service the communities of Binley and Willenhall, but with connecting bus services (and possibly VLR in the long term) providing orbital connections to Ansty Park, Hospital, Binley employment sites, JLR/Whitley South and the Gigafactory/Airport areas would score better.

Separately from this study, further high level work has been undertaken by:

- **Midlands Connect:** case for a regional strategic park and ride station at Coventry East
- **Network Rail:** option of a turnback platform at a Coventry East station for services from Birmingham and Nuneaton as a potential alternative to a Coventry bay platform

These separate workstreams will be considered and used to support future development work on this station where appropriate.

### **Tettenhall (Claregate/Pendeford – Wolverhampton)**

The study indicates that the best performing options to improve connectivity in this area are bus services improvements or a 2tph train service. Further work would be beneficial on both the bus services improvements and new station is therefore recommended on both options given the potential benefits and challenges of each.

The study area consists of several discrete places, each with their own local centre. Existing bus routes offer the opportunity to develop better hubs in each centre, rather than a new single node which may be distant from a large portion of the area, helping to generate place-making opportunities and link to a programme of walking and cycling enhancements within the study area.

The proposed bus option combines these newly enhanced hubs with the potential for better bus priority to reduce journey times and improve integration and interchange both between buses and with other modes for longer distance connectivity by rail and metro. By bus, the immediate focus is on the opportunities in Wolverhampton city centre and at the i54 business park.

However, it is evident that north west Wolverhampton has poor connectivity with the rest of the West Midlands and that direct access to the rail network could deliver significant benefits and support “Levelling up” objectives. Further work is therefore recommend on the cost and deliverability aspects of a station option in this area.



## Balsall Heath

While a new rail station scores well against the overarching programme level objectives, there are significant deliverability and feasibility constraints which are considered very likely to result in substantial investment and/or operating costs.

As a result, other investment alternatives focussed on active modes and further incremental enhancements to bus provision score equally well. These could be considered complementary, while the active mode enhancements could ultimately help to support the benefits from a rail station through first/last mile measures.

Given the planned investment in buses and active modes through the CRSTS and BSIP, it is proposed that the preferred SR solution is to investigate better provision for these modes with:

- The potential for additional bus priority to reduce journey times towards Birmingham city centre;
- Enhanced stops on the main high streets to function as gateways and hubs which promote sense of place; and
- Better linkages to the current and planned active mode networks in and around the study area with the aim of providing direct, safe, and convenient connections to opportunities and services within 2 to 5km.

In the medium run, once the likely capacity and capability of the city centre rail network with the Camp Hill Line and MRH delivered is understood, then an early Network Rail Engineering Stage (ES) feasibility study should be undertaken to update the existing findings from Phases One and Two of this assessment and determine the likely overall cost and implications of a new station. This, with the 'case for change' in this strategic assessment, would be used to inform a final 'Decision to Develop' or otherwise for the new station proposal.

### **Brinsford (South Staffordshire)**

With the potential offered by the existing bus network in the north of Wolverhampton, coupled with the low density and relatively dispersed nature of additional development proposals at i54, Brinsford, and ROF Featherstone, enhancements to the existing bus network are likely to represent the best short to medium term solution for the study area. Uncertainties regarding HS2 Phase 2, and the availability of future capacity on the WCML, reinforce this conclusion.

Enhancements to buses would, additional dependent on the scale of future development, encompass changes to routes, frequency uplifts, and the ambition to develop higher quality hubs and interchanges which can act as gateways to the places they serve. Existing bus routes offer the opportunity to develop better hubs in each centre, rather than a new single node which may be distant from a large portion of the area, helping to generate place-making opportunities and link to a programme of walking and cycling enhancements within the study area.

The potential for a new station should be reviewed if the economic developments at i54 and ROF Featherstone are realised in full and local plans increase the certainty and density of the proposed development around Brinsford itself.

### **Foleshill (Coventry)**

The assessment has concluded that, in the Short Run (SR), investment in to enhance existing bus services is the best performing, and most deliverable, option to address problems and opportunities identified within Sections 4 and 7.

Although the scoring exercise identified that rail options were likely to deliver greatest benefit for enhanced connectivity and therefore greater outcomes against Levelling Up and Economic Success objectives, investment in bus services are likely to be more deliverable while still achieving broadly comparable benefit against strategic objectives. This finding would change with a 2 tph service at Foleshill between Coventry and Nuneaton, providing a significantly enhanced offer to residents and visitors, but this is dependent on an uncertain project to deliver the necessary infrastructure and further commitments around funding the associated services.

The relative performance of the bus option is largely due to the potential of Foleshill Road which is already served by high frequency bus services, which unlike rail options, deliver direct access into the centre of Coventry. For local trips between Foleshill and Coventry, enhanced bus services are likely to provide a more attractive option, especially given the location of Coventry Station on the south side of the city centre.

Separately, it is recommended that the potential for a new rail station at Foleshill, to be served by 2tph, is considered as part of future optioneering for the next phase of enhancements to the Coventry to Nuneaton rail route. It is recognised that this option may complement, or otherwise, other aspirations for the potential services on this route