

Council – 5th November 2007

Walsall rail service and facilities improvement plan

The Council at its meeting on 11th September 2006 approved the following notice of motion:

That this Council is totally opposed to the Department for Transport's (DfT) West Midlands Rail Franchise draft proposals to sever two of our direct connections to InterCity services and to threaten the third.

This Council:

1. Demands that the DfT recognises the ambitious growth agenda and urban renaissance which will make the Borough of Walsall one of the leading towns in the West Midlands.
2. Asks that the DfT recognises that the franchise proposals would severely segregate the borough from the wider region and the country as a whole. This is totally unacceptable and will jeopardise our ambition to bring about long term economic success and sustained viability to the districts and communities of Walsall Borough.
3. Seeks confirmation from DfT that major changes to the West Coast main line timetable will not in any way restrict our existing four trains an hour in peak times specifically to Birmingham New Street and our connectivity to Birmingham International Airport. Any change will hamper Walsall's connectivity to the rest of the region and the country.
4. Is opposed to the curtailment of the current Stafford service at Rugeley Trent Valley and would ask that the services through to Stafford are retained within the franchise, with an enhanced frequency during peak times.
5. Asks that the DfT investigates ways of having improved rail services and facilities for the borough of Walsall rather than reduce our services.
6. Requests that the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel investigates and develops a Rail Service and facilities improvement plan for the borough of Walsall, in order to inform future decisions made by the DfT and to assist an investigation by the DfT for improved rail services and facilities.

7. Reiterates our strong opposition to the termination of the Walsall – Wolverhampton rail service. It asks that DfT retain it within the base specification as a shuttle between the two key centres with an enhanced frequency, particularly during peak times. This Council supports the development of intermediate stations along the route to serve the Darlaston Strategic Development Area and the Willenhall district centre and that the developments are progressed by the Council in association with appropriate stakeholders with due diligence. We ask that the future development and potential of this link is taken into serious consideration.

8. This Council welcomes the support that Centro – PTA have given to Walsall rail services through the Central Trains franchise and requests that the DfT includes the PTE as a co-signatory in the new West Midlands franchise.

The Cabinet at its meeting held on 24th October 2007 approved the Walsall rail service and facilities plan 2007 and referred it back to Council in answer to the notice of motion referred to above. The report is attached as an appendix hereto.

Cabinet – 24 October 2007

Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan

Portfolio: Councillor Adrian Andrew – Regeneration and Enterprise
Councillor Anthony Harris – Transport

Service: Strategic Regeneration

Wards: All

Key decisions: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

Summary of report

A motion from Council on 11 September 2006 requested that Regeneration Scrutiny Panel review rail issues and develop an improvement plan for rail in Walsall. This report seeks support for the proposed Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan 2007.

The Plan, a copy of which is appended to this report, outlines the current policies on Rail within our Unitary Development Plan and encapsulates into one document the aspirations of the council, our partners and key stakeholders. The document will be used to promote our aspirations with Department for Transport, Network Rail, rail operators and Centro-WMPTA (West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority) to inform and influence their future decisions on rail enhancements serving Walsall.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan 2007 is approved
- (2) That the Plan is referred back to Full Council in answer to their Notice of Motion.

Resource and legal considerations

The aspirations within the Plan will require a partnership approach towards delivery, with Walsall Council needing to work closely with Department for Transport, Network Rail, train operators, Centro-WMPTA, developers and neighbouring authorities to identify and pool resources. The Plan encapsulates Walsall's future aspirations and priorities into a single document, making it easier to promote our ideas with these partners and encourage joint working towards delivery.

Land acquisitions may be needed to deliver certain aspirations, for example new station developments, which will require legal agreements and possible compulsory purchase. There may also be legal issues where the plan proposes the reintroduction of rail services onto current redundant lines. However, these would be looked into further as any such proposals were progressed. Any part of the plan delivery requiring additional council resource will be subject to a separate approval process.

Citizen impact

Enhanced rail services and facilities within Walsall will improve the connectivity of the borough, both internally and with neighbouring areas and with the national rail network. This will benefit local citizens, particularly those without access to a car, opening up new opportunities. It will also improve the attractiveness of Walsall as a retail centre and to commercial businesses, improving the longer term economic prosperity of the Borough.

There may be some objections from residents local to current redundant rail lines, who do not want to see them brought back into use. However, any such objections received would need to be balanced against the wider benefits to Walsall and its citizens.

Community safety

Rail is a safe form of transport, with statistics showing it to be far safer than travel by private car. This suggests that achieving greater modal shift from the private car onto rail would result in additional reductions in transport related deaths and injuries.

A key aspect in promoting greater use of rail in Walsall will be overcoming the actual and perceived safety and security issues of both parking at railway stations and using train services. This is identified within the document, promoting the development of more attractive and safe parking facilities, along with greater use of CCVT and other safety features. The document also promotes greater development of safer walking and cycling routes to stations serving the network through Walsall.

Environmental impact

The Plan is promoting the development of rail, which produces less carbon dioxide in moving passengers and freight than other modes of transport. Overall rail is only responsible for about 1% of UK carbon dioxide emissions and is recognised nationally as having a significant role to play in meeting the Government's emissions targets.

Increasing the coverage and use of the rail network within Walsall, particularly during peak times, will help to reduce congestion and the associated air pollution by encouraging modal shift from the car to rail.

Performance and risk management issues

The proposals within the Plan merely support existing policies within the Councils' adopted Unitary Development Plan and do not introduce any new policies, targets or indicators. The document should therefore not adversely impact on performance management needs and should actually help to deliver existing Local Transport Plan policies about reducing congestion and encouraging greater public transport usage.

Effective delivery of the plan is dependent on being able to influence the work programmes and activities of key partners and stakeholders involved in the operation and maintenance of the rail network and train services. There is a risk that these organisations are not able or prepared to support delivery of improvements for Walsall. Officers and Scrutiny Members have ensured that these organisations have been fully involved in the development of the plan throughout the process and the final plan includes their endorsement of the proposals. However, there is no guarantee that this will materialise into actual improvements.

Equality implications

Tackling the problem of all members of our communities being able to access key services, facilities and opportunities requires an integrated and concerted approach to the delivery of transport and services at a local level. Rail is an important part of the transport network and offers choices and opportunities for accessing jobs, education and major services at the local and wider level.

An enhanced rail service within Walsall would be of particular benefit to those members of our community who do not have access to a car. Any proposals developed from the aspirations within the Plan would have to meet equal opportunity requirements including providing improved access for all members of our society.

Consultation

The Plan has been developed with and endorsed by key partners and stakeholders including Network Rail, train operating companies, Centro-WMPTA, Walsall Regeneration Company and the Chamber of Commerce, neighbouring authorities and local rail groups. There has also been local consultation with Walsall residents, with the majority of responses being overwhelmingly supportive. The very few letters of concern received from residents related to local issues and the possible impact of any changes to the rail network on their specific properties.

Vision 2008

Delivery of the Rail Plan directly contributes towards improving transport links into and around the borough, accessing local services and strengthen the local economy. It also supports the development of a cleaner and safer borough, encouraging people to feel proud of Walsall.

Background papers

- Walsall Council papers and minutes from 11 September 2006 regarding Notice of Motion – West Midlands Rail Franchise Consultation
- Walsall Council papers and minutes from 15 January 2007 regarding Notice of Motion on Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield rail link

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15 October 2007



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15 October 2007



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Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan

October

2007

Walsall Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan 2007

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1. FOREWORD

- 1.1 Walsall is a strategic centre within the West Midlands Region and has a population in excess of 250,000. The borough is at the centre of urban renaissance within the West Midlands conurbation, with our agenda for regeneration already beginning to produce early improvements.
- 1.2 A revitalized and thriving town centre is at the heart of our vision, which will provide a driving force for the regeneration of the borough as a whole. Work is already underway to develop the town centre canalside waterfront as a vibrant, high quality mixed-use development with more than 1,800 new homes. A new office corridor and Business and Learning Campus is at the heart of a pioneering initiative to create a new environment for skills, enterprise and business that will make Walsall one of the leading towns in the West Midlands.
- 1.3 Establishing high quality rail links to London and other towns and cities is vital to Walsall's long-term prosperity and our ability to promote ourselves to the wider business, tourism and visitor markets.
- 1.4 Developing a diverse range of quality public transport options and linkages will enable the town centre, and the borough as a whole, to develop as a sustainable, 21st century community creating jobs, homes and economic prosperity whilst functioning as a fully integrated element within the wider region.
- 1.5 Preserving and improving our transport network is critical if we are to attract the kind of investment that can help us diversify our economic base without damaging the environment or overloading our infrastructure. Maintaining and improving the town's rail networks will be essential in delivering this sustainable growth.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan is to highlight our aspirations for the future development of the rail network serving Walsall for the twenty year period from 2007 to 2027. It does this by grouping together in one document the rail-related policies contained within the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP).
- 2.2 The relevant (UDP) Policies which provide the policy framework that this Plan supports are outlined in Appendix A. The Plan covers network wide issues as well as the development of services and infrastructure on a line-by-line basis (Appendix B). Any specific proposals will go through a full consultation process with residents and stakeholders at appropriate stages in the future.
- 2.3 The Plan is in harmony with the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy, the emerging Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country and the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (Appendix A).
- 2.4 Funding for the proposals will need to come from a variety of sources, including Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC), Network Rail, Centro-WMPTA (West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority) and external partners.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The Rail Development Plan is designed to meet the following objectives, to:
 - contribute to the revitalisation and development of the rail network;
 - provide a framework for local investment by the rail industry and others;
 - widen the choice of attractive travel modes available to residents, visitors and businesses;
 - improve access to jobs and services in ways that are sustainable;
 - enable rail to play a part in reducing the carbon footprint and contribute to broader environmental objectives.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft document was sent to Centro, Network Rail, passenger and freight train operators and the Department for Transport. Views were also sought from surrounding local authorities, Regional Rail Forum members and rail promotion groups. Comments were invited from key partners and stakeholders in the borough and elected members, MPs and MEPs. Local newspapers also alerted members of the public to the fact that the document was available on the council Internet site.
- 4.2 We appreciate the wealth of constructive comments and suggestions received. We would like to thank Railfuture and the Walsall Local History Centre for providing so much of the historical background to rail services in the borough.

Responses received from:

Agencies

Birmingham City Council
Cannock Chase District Council
Cannock Chase Rail Promotion Group
Centro
Friends of the Earth
Govia (London Midland)
Lichfield District Council
Network Rail
Railfuture
Richard Shepherd MP
Transport 2000
Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership
Walsall Chamber of Commerce
Walsall Disability Forum
Walsall MBC Economic Regeneration
Walsall Service Users Council
Worcestershire County Council

Local Residents

Arrowsmith, Raymond
Bradley, William
Brookes P R
Corbett, Roger
Crundwell, Bob
Ellis, K
Evans, Sue
Ferkins, Trevor
French, Ann and John
Greenaway K A
Harvey, H T
Harvey, Jennifer
Isaac, Sonia
Kitchen, Mike
Knock, Len
Morris, Mr and Mrs C
Morris, Sue
Puzey, Richard
Sadler, R E
Sims, Stan
Smith, Ray
Stocker, Spencer
Towner, Ian
Worrall, Richard
Wright, Steven

Endorsements of the draft Plan:

Govia (London Midland):

We acknowledge our interest in the plan and our general support for its overall objectives. The new West Midlands franchise will serve economically strong and growing communities. As a key transport provider we look forward to supporting and playing a full part in continued sustainable growth. Following the start of the franchise on November 11, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the adopted plan in greater detail.

Network Rail:

The Walsall MBC 'Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan' is a prime example of how external Stakeholders and Network Rail's Route Planning Teams around the country are working closely together to develop unified short and long term rail strategies. This Rail Improvement Plan exhibits how important rail is to local towns and communities. It underlines how rail has a key role to play in supporting growth of the local economy and offers the preferred option for commuting into Birmingham City Centre. The Network Rail Route Planning Team, based in Birmingham, continues to work closely with Walsall MBC and other stakeholders to ensure the aspirations within this strategy are progressed.

Centro/WMPTA:

Centro/WMPTA is fully supportive of the overall objectives of the plan, and in particular, its focus on improvements to public transport in and around Walsall and its connectivity to the rest of the West Midlands region through a redeveloped and revitalised rail network. There are many proposals which will be mirrored in our Rail Strategy which will be available for stakeholder comment in the autumn. Centro/WMPTA is supportive in principle to your Plan and will consider how best to integrate your proposals into our own plans. In the meantime, we look forward to future dialogue with you and other industry partners to bring many of your proposals to fruition

Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership:

In my capacity as the Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and as the local Police Chief Superintendent I support this improvement plan. Relieving the current traffic congestion and improving the network would provide a timely boost to the regeneration of Walsall as a whole and make our policing patrol strategy easier to deliver.

Walsall Regeneration Company:

Walsall's first Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan clearly portrays the challenges and opportunities for rail in the area. We support fully the objectives outlined in the plan and look forward to playing our part with a range of partners and stakeholders to bring the Plan to fruition. Maintaining and developing a diverse range of quality public transport options and linkages will enable the town centre and the Borough as a whole to develop as a sustainable 21st century community, creating jobs, homes and economic prosperity whilst functioning as a fully integrated element within the wider region.

Chamber of Commerce:

Walsall is a very large and rapidly transforming Borough. It deserves a transport system that is appropriate to its needs, both in the present and the future. This is vital to the economic wellbeing of the Borough. Rail should be an integral part of the complete package of transport provision. Rail use in the Borough has increased despite poor levels of service in recent times - both in terms of frequency and reliability. Efforts to improve connectivity are therefore welcomed.

Birmingham City Council:

As Head of Transportation Strategy, I would like to offer my support for Walsall's aspirations to improve rail services, including more frequent services to and from Birmingham, reinstated passenger services on the Sutton Park line, and retention and development of the Walsall to Wolverhampton service. I would also support Walsall's aspirations for general enhancements including line speed and freight gauge improvements, and re-opening throughout the Stourbridge-Walsall-Lichfield line. I look forward to working with Walsall MBC, Network Rail and Centro in taking these and other rail network aspirations forward.

Wolverhampton City Council:

Wolverhampton City Council supports all your ambitions as set out in your plan. In particular, we would support the retention after December 2008 of the rail service between Wolverhampton and Walsall. We would also support your longer term ambitions to extend train services to Aldridge and the reinstatement of the Ryecroft to Brownhills line.

Lichfield District Council:

We support Walsall's proposals for the re-instatement of the Walsall-Lichfield line where applicable, and the re-introduction of freight/passenger services. The Council would be

keen to be involved in any initiatives which could progress the stated ambitions in this respect.

Cannock Chase Council:

This council supports the reinstatement of the Walsall-Lichfield route, and the electrification of the Walsall to Rugeley line. It also welcomes the identification of service improvements outlined in this document

Members of the public:

Members of the public were generally very supportive, especially for the reopening of the Aldridge Railway Station.

Railfuture, Cannock Chase Rail Promotion Group, Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth:

Comments received from these groups to the effect that it is welcomed that Walsall Council is putting these rail proposals into one document and is so supportive of rail. This Plan details well the opportunities and challenges facing the rail network around Walsall. It supports many of these groups' aspirations, including the electrification and enhancement of the Chase Line, and the re-opening of disused lines in the Walsall area. The thoughts and aspirations detailed for the future are very similar to the views long held by these groups.

5. OUR PRIORITIES

5.1 The proposals set out in this document range from service quality performance to major capital investment in new infrastructure. To achieve the Plan proposals it will be necessary to bring together funding from Walsall Council, Network Rail, train operating companies, Centro/West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) and other sources. Walsall Council recognises the need to prioritise and focus on those schemes that are most practical and deliver the greatest benefits.

5.2 The Plan aspirations are broken down into three time periods:

- Immediate Priorities: improvements that are a high priority and can be secured within the period of the Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011;
- Further Goals: improvements which will need more time to develop but could be secured within a 5 - 10 year period;
- Longer Term Aspirations for further development: in the 11- 20 year period. Many of these aspirations will be subject to feasibility and further studies.

Immediate Priorities 2006 – 2011:

5.3 Walsall Station

- Walsall Council will work with Govia and Centro to identify services that could be routed through Walsall Station to connect to London and other major towns and cities
- Walsall Council will co-operate with Network Rail in their signal renewal programme in the Walsall area, which will improve performance.

5.4 Corridor: Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford

- We will write to Office of Rail Regulation in support of the proposal to run five trains per day in each direction between Wrexham and London Marylebone, stopping at Tamebridge Parkway, from March 2008
- In order to improve services:
 - Walsall Council will encourage Govia and Centro/PTA to enhance Cannock Line evening service provision and provide half-hourly off-peak service to Hednesford / Rugeley Trent Valley
 - We would ask Govia and Centro/PTA and bus operators to facilitate four trains per hour stopping at Bescot (to serve a major Park & Ride facility)
- In order to improve facilities:
 - Walsall Council will support Centro/PTA to take forward the Cannock Rail Showcase package to upgrade all six stations on the route between Bloxwich and Rugeley Town and increase all platform lengths to accommodate 6 car train lengths.
 - Centro/PTA will provide induction loops and new “live” easy to read departure information displays on platforms and at station entrances at Bescot Station, Hamstead and Perry Barr

- Walsall Council will encourage the provision of improved facilities for interchange at Rugeley Trent Valley station
- And the extension of Park and Ride at Cannock and Hednesford
- We will work with Centro to investigate the potential for further Park and Ride on the Chase Line in the Walsall area.
- Walsall Council will co-operate fully with Network Rail in their:
 - Investigation into the feasibility of building the Ryecroft Chord, linking the Sutton Park Line with the Chase Line. This must not compromise the future re-opening of the Walsall-Brownhills Line.
 - Resignalling of Walsall area to improve linespeed / capacity / capability / performance
 - Development of a Pleck Junction freight turn-back facility to increase capacity and ease congestion at Bescot Yard

5.5 Corridor: Wolverhampton – Walsall – Sutton Coldfield

- Walsall Council will work with Centro and Govia to secure improvements to the Walsall – Wolverhampton rail route as part of the December 2008 timetable planning process.
 - We will work with Centro/PTA and partners to identify funding and reopen Willenhall Station.
- We will work with Centro, Network Rail and Birmingham CC to determine the cost and viability of reintroducing passenger services on the Sutton Line between Walsall and Sutton, with intermediate stations serving Aldridge and Streetly
- Walsall Council will co-operate fully with Network Rail in their investigation into the feasibility of building the Ryecroft Chord, linking the Sutton Park Line with the Chase Line. This must not compromise the future re-opening of the Walsall-Brownhills Line.

5.6 Corridor: Stourbridge – Walsall – Lichfield

- In order to reinstate freight and passenger services:
 - Walsall Council and neighbouring authorities will ensure that the potential for the Stourbridge – Walsall - Derby route is fully investigated as part of Network Rail's new Route Utilisation Strategy for the region.
 - Walsall Council will work with Centro to determine the viability of short-term public transport use of Walsall-Brownhills corridor and the potential for Park and Ride.
 - We will encourage Network Rail and other stakeholders to seize the opportunity to bid for funding for the Stourbridge – Walsall route from the £200m allocated by Government for the creation of a Strategic Freight Network.
 - We will assist Centro and Network Rail in a study to investigate the feasibility of re-opening Stourbridge-Walsall, and possibly the Lichfield line, to tram-trains.

- Walsall Council will co-operate fully with Network Rail in their investigation into the feasibility of building the Ryecroft Chord to see if it can also link to the Walsall-Brownhills Line.
- We will ensure that Network Rail's resignalling scheme can accommodate a reinstated Walsall-Brownhills Line.

Further Goals 5 – 10 years:

5.7 Walsall Station

- Walsall Station will be remodelled to increase capacity and enable greater flexibility
- The station will form part of an “urban interchange” for multi-modal public transport for tram, bus and rail links – maximising the contribution of public transport provision to a vibrant town centre accessible to all of Walsall's diverse communities.

5.8 Corridor: Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford

- The Ryecroft Chord will be built to link the Chase Line to the Sutton Line to improve operational flexibility and also freight and passenger capacity / capability / performance.
- Walsall Council will work with neighbouring authorities and others to make the case for the electrification of the Sutton Line: Walsall – Nuneaton (- Coventry) and also the Chase Line: Walsall – Rugeley Trent Valley.
- There will be improvement to services by:
 - Establishing new connections to the National Rail Network and InterCity connections to London and other major cities to provide greater connectivity
 - Increasing the number of trains from New Street to Walsall from four to six per hour during the working day
 - There will be increased frequency of passenger services north of Walsall, with additional rolling stock and/or fleet replacement and platform extensions across all stations to Rugeley to increase capacity and capability
 - Bescot Station will have longer platforms and the station will be fully compliant with disabled access requirements.
 - There will be additional Park and Ride provision at Tame Bridge, Rugeley Town and Rugeley Trent Valley. Bescot Station will be a major Park and Ride facility serving Walsall and Birmingham
 - There will be improvements to staffing at Bloxwich, Bloxwich North and Landywood.

5.9 Corridor: Wolverhampton – Walsall – Sutton Coldfield

- There will be a half-hourly services between Walsall and Wolverhampton
- Stations will be built serving Willenhall, Aldridge and Streetly
- The Ryecroft Chord will be built to link the Chase Line to the Sutton Line to improve operational flexibility and also freight and passenger capacity / capability / performance.

- Walsall Council will work with neighbouring authorities and others to make the case for the electrification of the Sutton Line.

5.10 Corridor: Stourbridge – Walsall – Lichfield

- A short-term solution for public transport use will generate patronage along this corridor
- We will work with Centro/PTA to investigate the potential for Park and Ride on the Walsall-Lichfield Line
- Walsall Council will liaise with industry partners and neighbouring authorities to make the case for reinstatement of freight and passenger services on the Stourbridge-Walsall-Lichfield Line.
- We will work with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of linking the Walsall-Lichfield route into the Ryecroft Chord.

Longer term Aspirations 11- 20 years:

5.11 Walsall Station

- The station will have regular InterCity connections as part of a diverse range of quality public transport options and linkages which will enable the town centre, and the borough as a whole, to develop as a sustainable, 21st century community creating jobs, homes and economic prosperity whilst functioning as a fully integrated element within the wider region.

5.12 Corridor: Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford

- The Chase Line will be electrified and there will be other improvements to track and signalling which will allow the introduction of a faster, more frequent, passenger rail service with an enhanced passenger environment.
- The electrification will be linked to the Coventry – Nuneaton – Water Orton – Ryecroft electrification, including the Ryecroft Chord, to increase the potential of the line to accommodate enhanced local and long distance passenger services.

5.13 Corridor: Wolverhampton – Walsall – Sutton Coldfield

- Tram-Trains will serve the heavily populated catchment areas along the route
- Electrification of the Sutton Park Line through to Nuneaton linked with Walsall-Rugeley electrification, and the construction and electrification of the Ryecroft Chord, will provide a major strategic freight route including scope for passenger services.

5.14 Corridor: Stourbridge – Walsall – Lichfield

- The Stourbridge – Walsall – Lichfield Line will be reinstated for freight and passenger services. Tram-Trains will serve the heavily populated catchment areas along the route
- The Ryecroft Chord will be built to link the Stourbridge-Walsall-Lichfield Line to the Chase Line and Sutton Line to improve operational flexibility and also freight and passenger capacity / capability / performance.

6. THE VISION – Walsall is on the brink of a new era

6.1 Once a great manufacturing centre, Walsall is now re-inventing itself for the 21st century as a place where people want to live and work. A place at the hub of Britain's transport and waterway system, with a vibrant heritage and an exciting future. To make that vision a reality, Walsall is gearing up for a major regeneration programme in its town and district centres.

A TOWN FOR ENTERPRISE

6.2 Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) was formed in March 2004 to spearhead urban regeneration within its designated 780 hectares. It is focused on attracting more than £750 million of private and public sector investment over the next decade, creating more than 5,500 new jobs, over 1,500 new homes and reclaiming in excess of 70 hectares of land.

6.3 In its Prospectus for Growth "Walsall – A town for Enterprise", WRC identifies eight major projects that will help restore Walsall as a leading Black Country market town:

A new 21st Century College and Superstore

6.4 A pioneering initiative between Walsall College, Tesco, Walsall Council and WRC that will create a new environment championing skills, enterprise and business – making Walsall one of the leading towns in the West Midlands. The key elements of the project are the creation of a business and Learning Campus – incorporating the new £60 million-plus college, an Innovation Centre, business incubation facilities and quality office space – together with a high quality retail investment of circa £40 million by Tesco on the site presently occupied by Walsall College, which will integrate with and enhance the current town centre.

6.5 The campus will play a pivotal role in dramatically upgrading the skill base of local people and will build on the excellent working relationships with major blue chip companies – including Microsoft, Roland DG and Apple – forged by the College as Walsall seeks to move its economy firmly into the 21st century.

Office Corridor

6.6 A major opportunity exists for leading edge, blue chip employers and developers to create and establish a significant commercial presence in the town through the delivery of a prime office zone.

6.7 A new, commercially anchored, central business location is proposed for the Littleton Street/Blue Lane corridor with the creation of a series of high quality, sustainable office developments designed to meet the evolving needs of business and enterprise in the 21st century.

6.8 Creating a distinctive and innovative landscaped environment, the "Office Corridor" will generate a critical mass in this sector and stimulate further interest in Walsall as an attractive office location within the emerging City Region; located less than 25 minutes from the centre of Birmingham by rail.

6.9 Further concentrations of commercial activity are proposed for Hatherton Street and Stafford Street: these areas intersect with the Office Corridor and will provide connectivity and promote effective integration with the town centre.

St Matthew's Quarter

6.10 Work is advanced on several fronts to transform the southern end of High Street and deliver a much improved shopping experience along with offices and apartments, all within high quality public realm focused on streets not 'malls'.

6.11 Phase One includes the ASDA superstore, which opened in June 2007. The 40-plus apartments within Phase One have been acquired by a high profile local housing association and will provide a mix of private sale and shared-equity key worker accommodation.

6.12 Phases 2 and 3 of the scheme are now being developed, combining new 'high fashion' operators, quality restaurants and bars and an innovative 'in town' cinema, attracting a broader customer base, creating vibrancy, energy and enhanced consumer spend. It will include a 21st century market offer that builds on Walsall's well established heritage.

Bradford Place and Station Street

6.13 Bradford Place is envisaged as a major new public space, providing an additional retail focus linking the Saddlers Centre with the Victorian arcade and the Jerome Retail Park. The public realm will be remodelled to create an "urban interchange" for multi-modal public transport – Metro, bus and rail links – maximising the contribution of public transport provision to a vibrant town centre accessible to all of Walsall's diverse communities.

Waterfront North

6.14 Award winning property developer Urban Splash unveiled proposals in July 2006 for the first phase of the flagship £180 million Waterfront regeneration.

6.15 The Waterfront project as a whole will transform 17 acres of vacant and derelict land around Town Wharf and the canal arm into an exciting 'waterside quarter' as part of a revitalised town centre. When complete it is expected that around 700 new jobs will have been created.

6.16 Anchored by the iconic Art Gallery, Waterfront will be a vibrant, high quality mixed-use development. It will feature more than 650 new sustainable designer homes, 21st century offices, café-bars and restaurants, alongside leisure and cultural facilities, public artworks, and new bridges and basins.

6.17 Phase One proposals by Urban Splash are for seven new buildings designed by celebrated architects shedkm, SMC Alsop and Querkraft. They will in total create 154 new homes, new offices, ground floor retail and leisure space, two new public spaces and, potentially, a hotel.

Waterfront South

6.18 The emerging design for 300-plus residential units and 15,000 to 18,000 sq ft of commercial and leisure uses reflects the intention to create a comprehensive,

sustainable and economically deliverable scheme that incorporates 'best practice' in both built-form and public realm design.

New Gallery Square

6.19 This is a major project to create a vibrant, exciting new public square at the northern end of Park Street, which will be designed to enable the full integration of the 5Ws Metro line with the New Art Gallery and Waterfront. Featuring leisure, cultural, studio-type workspace and specialist retail uses, New Gallery Square will form an "anchor" space at the northern end of the town.

Canalside Communities

6.20 Walsall Canal provides the opportunity to link new and existing neighbourhoods, utilising a historic asset to provide an attractive environment for the creation of a variety of sustainable new homes that will attract people to live in the borough.

6.21 Along the canal to the north and south of the town centre new residential developments will be established in appropriate areas allowing the land to be regenerated.

6.22 Enjoying close proximity to the peaceful nature of the canal, these new communities will merge with existing development to create an almost unbroken chain of residential environments from the town centre through Reedswood and beyond to Leamore. Together these sites have the capacity to create more than 1,100 new homes along the canal corridor.

Darlaston Strategic Development Area

6.23 Located at the heart of the country, straddling the M6, Darlaston's existing and proposed links with the national motorway network have established its position as one of the West Midlands' prime regeneration opportunities.

6.24 This major strategic site of some 54 developable acres at Darlaston has the potential to create between 2,500 and 4,500 jobs over two phases. The creation of serviced sites to accommodate new logistics and distribution hubs will provide attractive locations for major national and international companies looking to establish a regional West Midlands base.

Aligned projects

6.25 St Matthew's Court: 92 high quality one, two and three-bedroom apartments

6.26 Smith Flour Mill: 45 loft-style homes within the converted period building along with 77 new-build apartments.

6.27 Pleck Road: This scheme of residential redevelopment for 184 units comprises dwellings and apartments.

6.28 Health provision is a key driver to regeneration. The long-awaited £140 million rebuilding of Walsall Manor Hospital has begun and will have far reaching impacts on the community. It is not just about better health care; it will also provide opportunities for skills training and jobs, and for a range of local firms and social enterprises to supply goods, services and expertise for this major capital investment.

6.29 Important first steps are being taken to develop a seedbed for skills and innovation that will create “Walsall, a town for enterprise”. There are also proposals for a revolution in fibre optics technology that will enable companies to do business hundreds of times faster than current broadband speeds and help them compete successfully in work markets.

TRANSFORMING WALSALL TOGETHER

6.30 The strategic regeneration framework: *Transforming Walsall Together* was prepared for Walsall Council and Walsall Housing Group. It outlines proposals for 10 individual projects in the borough’s district centres. This approach has been championed by Walsall Housing Partnership and Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership.

6.31 It is fundamentally important to attract and retain new and existing economically active households in the borough. The framework sets out a strategy for Walsall as a residential location of choice and will provide the borough with:

- Housing to meet the needs of all residents.
- Safe and attractive neighbourhoods
- Accessible schools and learning opportunities
- Employment and training opportunities for every resident
- Community activities including sports, arts and culture
- A thriving enterprise economy.

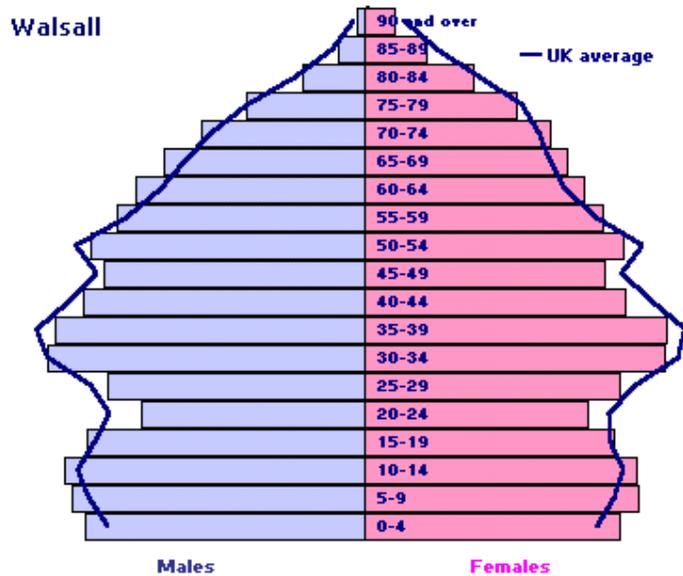
6.32 Key objectives are better links between the district centres, Walsall town centre and other regional centres including Lichfield, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. All the projects are inter-linked and connect with existing plans for regenerating the town centre by the Walsall Regeneration Company.

7. THE CHALLENGE FOR WALSALL

7.1 Walsall has a population of over 250,000 but is not directly served by InterCity services, which need to be accessed via Wolverhampton, Stafford and Birmingham.

national **STATISTICS**

census
2001



The length of the bars in the pyramid represent the proportion of 'all males' (to the left) and the proportion of 'all females' (to the right) that are in that age group.

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
0 - 4	16431	8323	8108
5 - 9	17488	8767	8721
10 - 14	17626	8967	8659
15 - 19	16200	8285	7915
20 - 24	13735	6652	7083
25 - 29	15774	7679	8095
30 - 34	19010	9466	9544
35 - 39	18824	9221	9603
40 - 44	16738	8425	8313
45 - 49	15423	7760	7663
50 - 54	16427	8181	8246
55 - 59	14974	7384	7590
60 - 64	13830	6848	6982
65 - 69	12464	5999	6465
70 - 74	10760	4851	5909
75 - 79	8387	3552	4835
80 - 84	5340	1845	3495
85 - 89	2835	799	2036
90 and over	1236	240	996
Totals	253502	123244	130258

Reducing Congestion and Air Pollution

- 7.2 Improving rail passenger services in the West Midlands is crucially important at this time when the region is working with the Department for Transport (DfT) on measures to attract motorists out of their cars. Large areas of Walsall's highway network suffer from excessive levels of congestion and the whole borough has been declared an Air Quality Management Area. Direct linkages have been made between areas of excessive congestion and poor air quality.
- 7.3 Congestion on the roads currently costs British business £17 billion a year and as road congestion from cars and vans increases, rail's competitive advantage will grow. Rail is very much less environmentally damaging than road, producing less than 1% of total UK CO2 emissions compared to 21% produced by road. Freight trains emit five times less carbon dioxide per tonne mile than road haulage. An average freight train can remove 50 HGVs from our roads

Narrowing the Inequalities Gap

- 7.4 Of the 354 local authority areas in England, Walsall is the 9th most deprived in terms of education and training, 41st most income deprived and 62nd most employment deprived as per the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004). The borough has a high level of unemployment (140% of the GB unemployment rate) and a high level of inactivity rate at 108% of GB rate.
- 7.5 Our Community Plan is a blue print for Walsall's transformation that will ensure Walsall is a more vibrant, stronger, safer, cleaner, greener and economically developed borough, helping us position Walsall as a vital and vibrant player in the success of the Region. A key action in our Community Plan is to press for radically improved public transport provision for Walsall.
- 7.6 In the face of global economic change, many traditional industries have struggled to invest or diversify and have closed down or moved out of the borough. This has left many people employed in low paid, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, or without employment altogether. Reducing worklessness by closing the gap on the West Midlands and UK average is the lead priority for the Local Area Agreement, and improving public transport access to employment has been identified as a major challenge in several local studies.

Improving Accessibility

- 7.7 Walsall's car ownership is lower than average and good rail services are essential to give people who do not have access to a car a reasonable choice of longer distance destinations by public transport. This is at the heart of Department for Transport's Accessibility Planning agenda, which Walsall is currently at the forefront of in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area.

Employment flows into and out of Walsall

7.8 Table 1 shows flows of workers from main residence to main workplace. More than one in three (34.8%) Walsall residents commute to work in Birmingham and nearly one in eight workers employed in Walsall (12.1%) come from Birmingham. One in five (20.2%) of all people who commute to work in Walsall originate from Wolverhampton and one in six (16.8%) are going the other way.

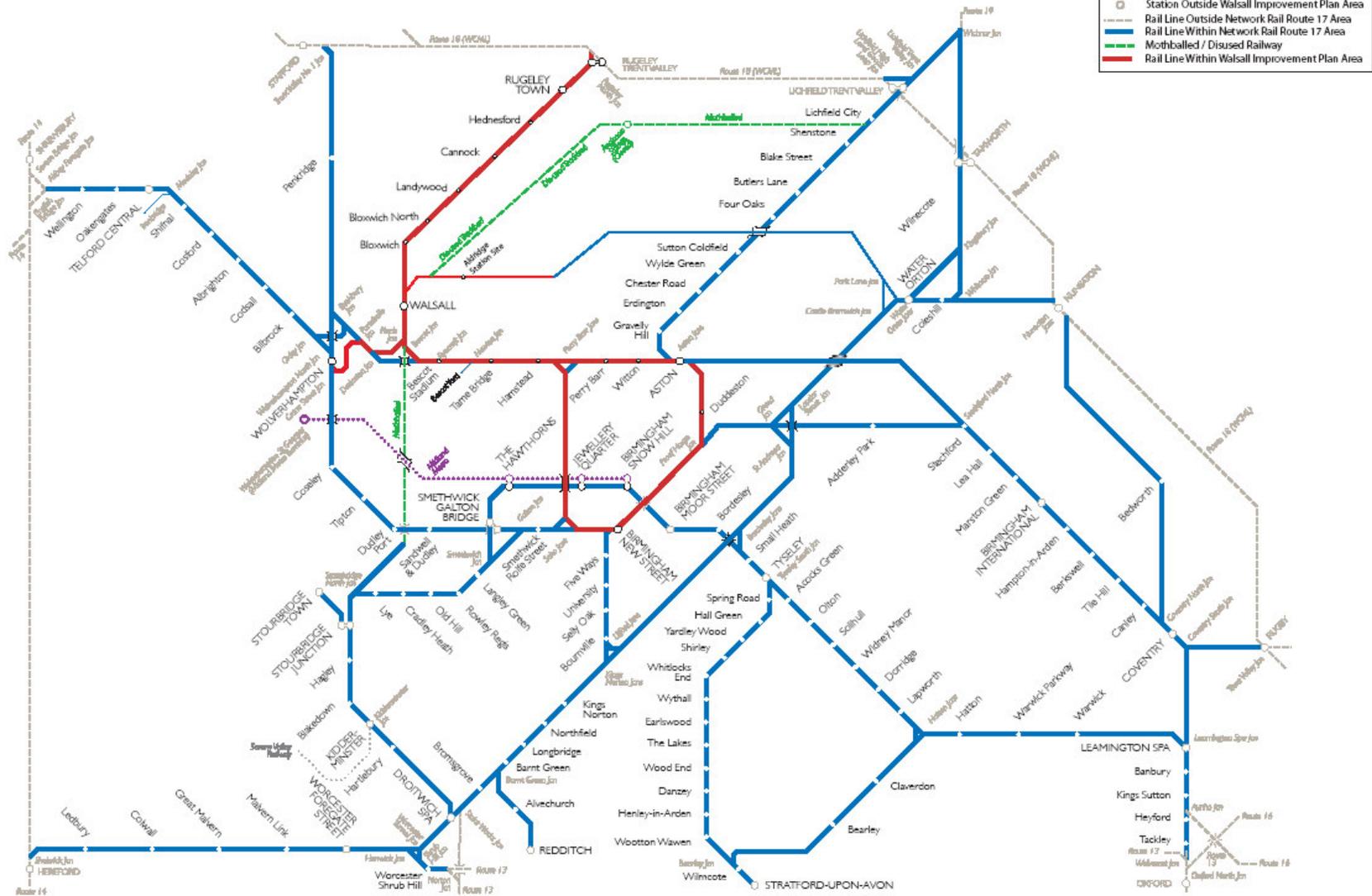
Area	Employed aged 16-74			
	Flows into Walsall from...	% of Total	Flows from Walsall to ...	% of Total
Wolverhampton	8,197	20.2	6,949	16.8
Sandwell	5,970	14.7	8,053	19.5
Birmingham	4,900	12.1	14,414	34.8
South Staffordshire	4,665	11.5	1,136	2.7
Cannock Chase	4,227	10.4	1,699	4.1
Lichfield	3,793	9.4	1,668	4.0
Dudley	2,473	6.1	1,781	4.3
Stafford	658	1.6	212	0.5
Telford & Wrekin	561	1.4	418	1.0
Solihull	445	1.1	876	2.1
Tamworth	410	1.0	330	0.8
East Staffordshire	272	0.7	170	0.4
Bridgnorth	255	0.6	73	0.2
Bromsgrove	247	0.6	162	0.4
Wyre Forest	205	0.5	92	0.2
N.Warwickshire	193	0.5	288	0.7
Coventry	116	0.3	296	0.7
Wychavon	113	0.3	65	0.2
Shrewsbury & Atcham	95	0.2	43	0.1
Redditch	93	0.2	105	0.3
Rest of region	631	1.6	489	1.2
W Midlands region	38,519	95.1	39,319	95.1
Outside region	1,985	4.9	2,043	4.9
All areas	40,504	100	41,362	100

Source: 2001 Census of Population (Origin-Destination Table W101) © Crown Copyright

Network Rail Business Plan 2007 (maps kindly provided by Network Rail)

Network Rail
Route 17 - West Midlands

Walsall Rail Service Improvement Plan Area



8. WALSALL'S RAIL NETWORK TODAY: 2007

- 8.1 Rail in the region suffers from crowded trains on key routes and congestion at New Street and Wolverhampton Stations. It carries only a fraction of its full potential of both passengers and freight. Passenger expectations have also increased and it is clear that if rail travel is to continue to be an attractive alternative to the car, it has to offer a quality travel experience that is safe, secure, fast, affordable, reliable, convenient and comfortable.
- 8.2 The rail industry and the Department for Transport (DfT) are trying to understand what is driving much higher than anticipated rail passenger demand on much of the network, with Network Rail admitting that the factors are "not yet fully understood". Stakeholders have suggested the higher than forecast growth could be because of the effects of planning policies promoting development in areas better served by public transport; increased localised road congestion; reduced availability of work place parking and increasing price of town centre parking.
- 8.3 There are frequent conflicts between national services, freight services and local services. Parts of the rail network are already at capacity and there is a serious need to free the region of bottlenecks.
- 8.4 Walsall is a rail hub with undeveloped potential and reopening rail lines in the Walsall area could also add capacity around the extremely congested rail hub in the Birmingham area.
- 8.5 Currently Walsall has three rail corridors, only one of which is fully developed:
- Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford;
 - Wolverhampton – Walsall – Sutton Line
 - Stourbridge – Walsall – Lichfield.

Walsall Station

- 8.6 Walsall Station is restricted by capacity problems caused by having only three through tracks and one bay. Despite this, Walsall Station has experienced one of the fastest growing patronage trends in the West Midlands region. In the early 1990s Walsall's train patronage was declining. However, the brave step was taken to improve frequencies which, according to the Strategic Rail Authority Route Utilisation Strategy, has resulted in a 180% increase in passenger numbers using Walsall station over the ten years to 2004. This has been in the face of poor punctuality and reliability problems with the services passing through the station. This shows that when effective passenger services are provided in Walsall there is a demand for their use. It also shows that positive improvements and investment yield positive results.

Corridor: Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford

- 8.7 The main rail corridor on which Walsall is situated is the Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford corridor, which forms the double function of linking Walsall to the nation's InterCity rail hub at Birmingham New Street and connects Walsall

Town Centre to the northern part of its wider catchment in Cannock Chase District. The line is electrified between Birmingham and Walsall.

8.8 From Birmingham, there are four trains per hour:

- Train 1: semi-fast Birmingham, Tame Bridge Parkway, Walsall, Bloxwich, Bloxwich North, Landywood, Cannock, Hednesford, Rugeley Town , Rugeley Trent Valley and Stafford
- Train 2: Birmingham, Duddeston, Aston, Witton, Perry Barr, Hamstead, Tame Bridge Parkway, Bescot Stadium Walsall - terminates
- Train 3: semi-fast Birmingham, Tamebridge, Walsall - terminates
- Train 4: Birmingham, Duddeston, Aston, Witton, Perry Barr, Hamstead, Tame Bridge Parkway, Bescot Stadium and Walsall – terminates

8.9 During the off-peak daytime hours, two trains per hour run through to Birmingham International (via Birmingham New Street). A facility which will, unfortunately, be lost in the December 2008 timetable changes. Trains to London via Birmingham International Airport are an aspiration.

8.10 Bescot Station car park has considerable spare capacity during weekdays but the station is not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. Short platforms limit the types of train that can stop here. The platforms cannot be lengthened until a signal box is moved and this will be done as part of Network Rail's resignalling scheme in 2011.

8.11 The Bloxwich area of North Walsall is served by two stations a mere 600 metres apart. There are low numbers of passengers using Bloxwich and Bloxwich North stations partly owing to the hourly frequency but, in the case of Bloxwich, also to siting of the station in a location that is considered out of the way and insecure. The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) supports the relocation of Bloxwich to a site 250 metres southwards. Unfortunately, signalling and track constraints/standards, make moving Bloxwich station very difficult.

8.12 There is poor quality parking at Bloxwich North and none at Bloxwich station. A new site would give greater opportunity for parking.

8.13 The service north of Walsall was introduced on an experimental basis in 1989 and the 'temporary' wooden platforms at Bloxwich, Bloxwich North, Landywood and Cannock are now life-expired and require lengthening and complete replacement.

8.14 Since the Walsall-Hednesford passenger service was restored in April 1989 the service has gone from strength to strength and is now used by well over 10,000 passengers a week. The service has been a victim of its own success and now warrants additional improvements in both qualitative and quantitative terms if the Government's objectives of securing a shift to public transport are to be achieved.

8.15 Morning and evening peaks have seen additional service provision between Walsall and Hednesford, and this enhancement has been able to access growing passenger demand.

8.16 The last through train leaves Stafford at the inconveniently early time of 17.35 hrs and after 20.00 hrs the service from Birmingham to Hednesford becomes hourly, with no evening service to Rugeley after 18.30. Under the new franchise (page 24) there will not be a train from Walsall to Stafford, passengers will have to change at Rugeley Trent Valley.

Corridor: Wolverhampton - Walsall - Sutton Line

8.17 The improvement of this route is promoted in the Unitary Development Plans (UDP) of Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham Councils.

8.18 An hourly passenger service runs between Walsall and Wolverhampton - a distance of 8 miles and the rail journey takes less than 15 minutes. The line is electrified but the service is currently provided by a small diesel unit.

8.19 Patronage levels on this line are low and the service is under threat. The Coventry-Nuneaton line and this route are the only local routes in the West Midlands conurbation with an hourly service during peak times. Confidence in the service was undermined when punctuality and reliability was low and Central Trains replaced the service with a bus for some time. In addition to it being only an hourly service, timings of peak hour trains do not meet with the requirements of commuters and give poor connections with the Chase line trains.

8.20 There are no intermediate stations on this route. A Willenhall New Station Study was conducted on behalf of Centro in 2000. Its recommendation was that the station should be constructed since it has the potential to pay for itself within 10 years. Land acquired by Centro for a passenger railway station to serve the Willenhall District Centre and associated facilities is protected by Unitary Development Plan, Policy WH5.

8.21 The Sutton Line, running for 12.5 miles between Walsall and Water Orton, is freight only.

8.22 Centro own land for a station in Aldridge (title deed number WM720813) and outline planning permission was granted for a rail station and a small, rail-based park & ride near the railway track at Anchor Meadow. Unitary Development Plan, Policy AL6, protects this site. A business case needs to be made for the reinstatement of Aldridge Station.

8.23 There is potential to develop stations in Streetly and another in Sutton Coldfield town to serve the Sutton Park Line

Corridor: Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield

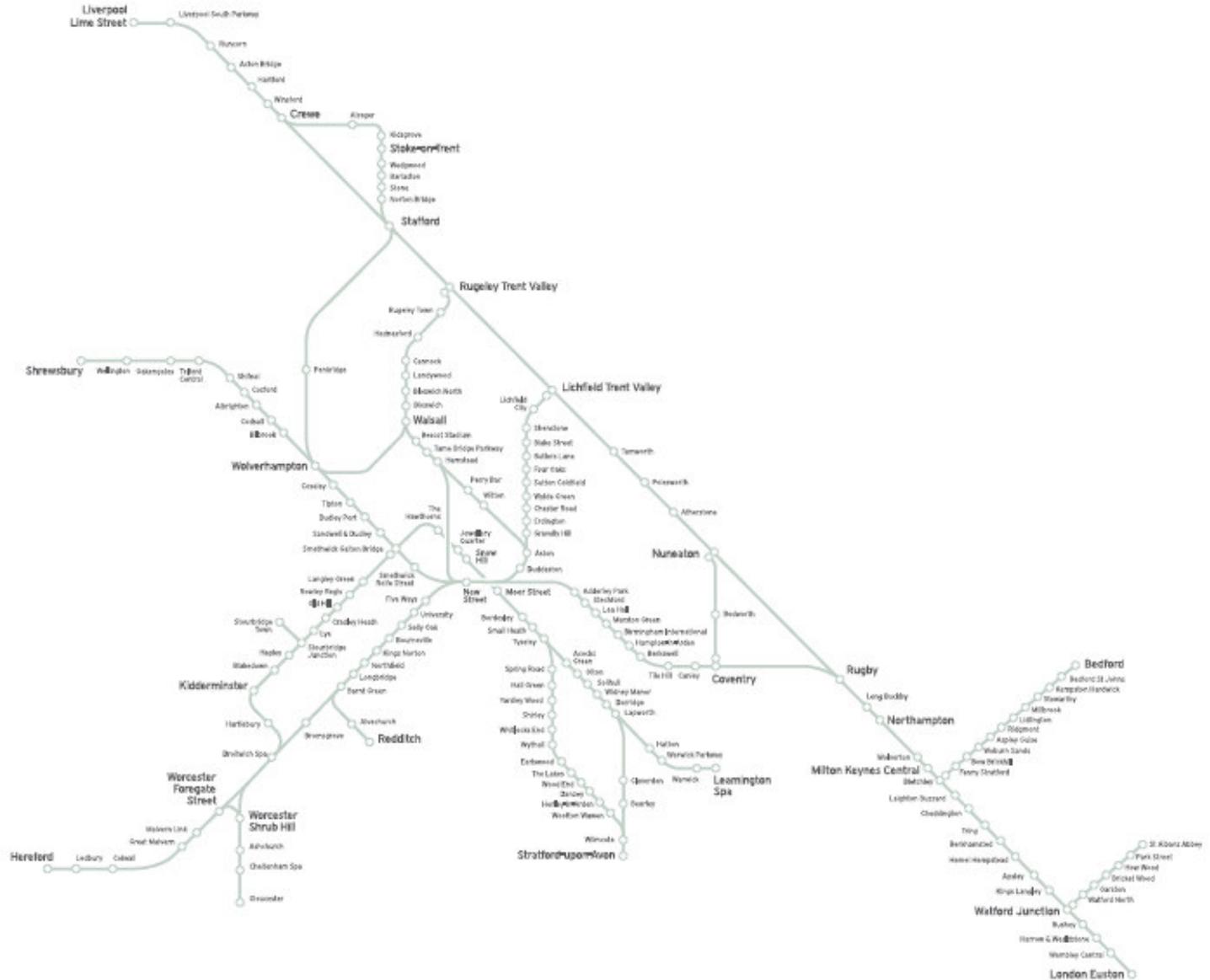
8.24 The third main route crossing Walsall is the currently disused Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield route. It connects Walsall and the Black Country, with Stourbridge Junction, and hence the south and south-west, and with Brownhills and Lichfield, for connections to Yorkshire and the North-East.

8.25 The Unitary Development Plan protects this route for future heavy rail use.

- 8.26 The track has now been lifted on the 5 miles between Ryecroft Junction and Anglesea Sidings just north of Brownhills but from here is retained for 4.5 miles at the Lichfield end northwards. Cannock Chase Council supports the reinstatement of the Walsall-Lichfield route. Network Rail has now downgraded the status of the remaining Brownhills-Lichfield section from an operational line to a 'mothballed' status. It is therefore important to ensure that this section of the track is retained and not lifted as a further economy measure by Network Rail. In the event that this did happen, reinstatement would require an application under the Transport and Works Act for reinstatement, which would be very time consuming and expensive.
- 8.27 The trackbed between Ryecroft Cemetery and Pelsall North is used as part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, Route 5.
- 8.28 South of Walsall the line from Stourbridge to Round Oak Steel Terminal is still in daily use; but the 7 miles from Round Oak to Pleck have not been used for over 20 years. Part of this route will be shared with the planned Metro extensions.
- 8.29 EWS and the Freight Transport Association both support the initial reopening of the existing mothballed Brierley Hill-Walsall section, and eventual restoration of the Walsall-Brownhills closed and lifted section, as part of an inter-regional rail freight bypass of the congested Birmingham area network.

Govia (London Midland) West Midlands Rail Franchise

routes map



9. WEST MIDLANDS RAIL FRANCHISE

- 9.1 In June 2007, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that London Midland (a subsidiary of Govia) is to operate the new West Midlands rail franchise. The franchise combines the current Silverlink County services between London Euston and Northampton with the West Midlands local and regional service groups of Central Trains. The Department for Transport will pay a subsidy of £1,127m (NPV) over the franchise of seven years and 10 months.
- 9.2 The new franchise will begin on 11th November 2007 and will run until 19th September 2015. The DfT has the right to terminate the franchise after six years if the operator is failing to meet agreed performance targets. In accordance with the objectives set for the franchise, the specification seeks to deliver sustainable value for money, improve performance and accommodate future growth in passenger demand. It will also implement the recommendations of the published West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy, West Coast Main Line Strategy and the West Midlands Regional Planning Assessment.
- 9.3 The Department for Transport (DfT) has confirmed that they are to fund the Walsall - Wolverhampton service until December 2008 in order to give more time for decisions to be made about its long term future and funding.
- 9.4 Govia has committed to deliver a package of improvements for the region's rail passengers including:
- New services, including a new semi-fast service between London and Crewe, serving the Trent Valley, and two trains an hour all day between Birmingham and Liverpool and Birmingham and Northampton from December 2008 on the completion of the West Coast Main Line modernisation
 - A fleet of 37 new electric Desiro trains by July 2009
 - New class 172 diesel trains to replace the existing class 150 diesel multiple units (DMUs) operating on the Snow Hill line services in the Birmingham area by July 2010
 - £11.5m investment in stations
 - 1033 more car parking spaces
 - Forecast 90.7% punctuality and reliability by the end of the franchise.
- 9.5 The Government will continue to limit annual rises of regulated fares in line with national policy, which is currently RPI+1%. As with all franchises, unregulated fares will be the responsibility of the operator. In the West Midlands, London and Birmingham Railway Ltd is expected to increase fares for journeys on the London to Northampton route by 3% above inflation per annum. Average rises on all other routes within the franchise including those in the West Midlands conurbation are expected to be no higher than RPI+1%.
- 9.6 Passengers in the franchise area will benefit from new arrangements and will be compensated for delays and poor performance.

- 9.7 International bus and rail operator Govia's commitment fully complements the work Centro-WMPTA is doing to provide an attractive alternative to the car and encourage more people on to public transport. Govia's "London Midland" rail branding will be fully integrated with the new Network West Midlands branding, which is currently being rolled out across the region's public transport network by Centro-WMPTA.
- 9.8 Centro (the joint public transport authority for the seven West Midlands metropolitan authorities) is not co-signatory to the new franchise agreement and so will no longer be responsible for the service specification or monitoring of performance. Centro will continue to get some performance information and have the power to change the DfT's service specification using the "increment/decrement" process. Through this, they will be able to fund enhancements to services, although the exact contractual mechanism is not currently clear.

West Midlands Rail Franchise - Impact on Walsall

- 9.9 The franchise proposals and major December 2008 timetable alterations will have a significant impact on rail services in Walsall:
- 9.10 Our direct service to Stafford will be curtailed at Rugeley Trent Valley where there will be connections with the proposed hourly, London - Crewe semi-fast service on the West Coast Mainline. This will reduce Walsall's direct linkage with InterCity services, as well as losing the direct local link with Stafford.
- 9.11 Walsall Council, Cannock Chase District Council and Staffordshire County Council have objected to the proposed withdrawal of the Birmingham-Walsall-Rugeley-Stafford through service from 2008.
- 9.12 Cannock Chase District Council suggests that as the Department for Transport (DfT) have yet to confirm that the two trains per hour Rugeley-Birmingham service is to be introduced (as compensation for loss of the through service), and as the route is now to be operated by 100 mph class 170 rolling stock, instead of the existing 75 mph 150 rolling stock, there may be grounds to promote retention of the through Stafford service.
- 9.13 Due to timetable changes, the direct link to Birmingham International Airport will cease in 2008. This will remove a strategic direct link from Walsall to Birmingham International Airport (BIA) with its national and international air connections. Maintaining high quality links to Birmingham New Street and to BIA is vital to Walsall's long-term prosperity and our ability to promote ourselves to the wider business, tourism and visitor markets. Discussions will take place with Govia into the possibility of linking some of the Walsall-New Street services with their New Street-Northampton services, for which there will be paths. However, this may result in more delays on the Walsall line.
- 9.14 Discussions are taking place between Govia and Centro to discuss, among other things, the possibility of an enhanced half hourly off-peak service between Walsall and Hednesford. Cannock Chase District Council supports the provision of a two

train per hour off-peak service between Rugeley and Birmingham, together with the introduction of an hourly evening weekday service between Birmingham and Rugeley, after 6.15 pm. It is likely to be the autumn before a fully worked up range of options can be developed that will allow funding priorities to be determined. Network Rail is planning to upgrade this route and may have issues about more services on the route prior to upgrade work occurring, and this needs to be explored more fully with them. We will continue to lobby for enhanced services on this route.

- 9.15 We welcome DfT's announcement that they are to fund the existing Walsall – Wolverhampton service until December 2008 in order to give more time for decisions to be made about its long term future and funding. We will continue to vigorously pursue a long term agreement and funding to secure the future of the route. We will press the case for the service to be maintained and promoted, with an enhanced frequency, particularly during peak times and with intermediate stations along the route. We will work with Centro, Network Rail and Govia to see whether any short-term timetable tweaks might be possible to improve the current patterns and frequency. However, the best opportunity will be to develop new half-hourly service opportunities for the route as part of the December 2008 timetable planning process.
- 9.16 With the proposed withdrawal of through trains to Stafford, the Wolverhampton link will be more important as Walsall's "gateway to the north", avoiding Birmingham

10. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 The major structural changes to the bus and rail industries in recent years have made it difficult to plan for the long term and for operators to invest in the future with confidence. The current signs are that a period of stability and growth is beginning, and opportunities are presenting themselves to invest for the long term. It is therefore critical that the Council works with Centro/PTA and the key operators to promote new investment which will help realise the vision and objectives of this Rail Service and Facilities Improvement Plan.
- 10.2 Local aspirations must be balanced alongside regional and national priorities, building on rail's strengths and new opportunities.
- 10.3 In particular, rail schemes need to:
- Demonstrate that they are realistic, deliverable and offer value for money
 - Make the best use of the existing network
 - Consider the most effective and efficient way to achieve the objectives and targets
- 10.4 The railway is a complex business. This is partly due to the interactions between different parts of the network, where a change in the timing of a train in one location can have knock-on effects across the wider network. There are conflicts between balancing the needs of passengers versus freight, of local versus inter-city services. There are also complex interactions between the contracting parties within the industry who have rights and obligations in terms of the safe and efficient operation of the network.
- 10.5 This complexity is also due to the strategies and funding streams of various organisations involved in rail, such as Network Rail, the train operators, Centro/West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) .
- 10.6 The Strategic Rail Authority was formerly responsible for coordinating the development of railways in Great Britain. The Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for the West Midlands 2006-2011 sets out scenarios of continuing growth in commuting to the centre of Birmingham. There is also an acknowledgement that the current network is operating at or close to capacity in terms of train paths and there is a critical passenger capacity issue at New Street station. The RUS outlines options and recommendations for accommodating future growth, a number of which take advantage of the resignalling schemes on this route over the next several years. The RUS makes no plans for extra line capacity, the quadrupling of the Wolverhampton to Coventry route and train capacity problems at New Street which affect all of the West Midlands and, indeed, the whole of the national network.
- 10.7 The Regional Planning Assessment 2011 to 2026 sets out the options for development of the railway in the West Midlands of England over the next 20 years. It provides the link between railway planning and spatial planning for the region.

- 10.8 Network Rail owns and operates Britain's rail infrastructure. Network Rail has very close relationships with the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (Centro), external stakeholders, and passenger/ freight operators. The Route Planning team provides input, where required, to all rail industry changes/enhancements, trying to ensure all projects are integrated, beneficial and meet rail industry requirements. Network Rail very much welcomes any 3rd party funding to support shortfalls in supporting delivery of any scheme that improves journey times, economy, social, capacity/capability and performance.
- 10.9 The Network Rail Discretionary Fund (NRDF) is a mechanism for funding minor schemes costing less than £5 million, identified by Network Rail, which are either linked to major renewals, or stand alone schemes, or other schemes which have a positive whole-industry business case. NRDF can only fund schemes that deliver increased or improved network capacity.
- 10.10 Network Rail Out Performance Fund (OPF). This fund can only be used on schemes which deliver performance related benefits. A few important schemes are being developed through the use of this fund. In most cases, contributions from third parties would be required to enable these schemes to be implemented in the immediate future. Alternatively, the developed schemes could be implemented following funding as part of the periodic review.
- 10.11 Network Rail Business Plan 2007-2009 will be updated in autumn 2007 with detailed plans for the period to 2014. There are opportunities to influence this Plan and Walsall Council is working with Network Rail to ensure that Walsall's aspirations are taken into consideration.
- 10.12 Network Rail is currently progressing with the re-signalling of the Walsall Power Signal Box (PSB) area, the expected commissioning date is late 2011. The signalling renewal date is staged, based on life of asset and steady migration of signalling into the West Midlands Signalling Centre.
- 10.13 As part of the re-signalling project, the Network Rail Route Planning team has identified further enhancements, which are over and above that of the planned renewals, that may deliver either improved levels of performance or/and increased operating capacity/capability.
- 10.14 These enhancement schemes may possibly be funded from the Network Rail Discretionary Fund (NRDF). Each scheme must have a justifiable industry business case, with a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least 2.
- 10.15 There are no specific priorities in these programmes as all are driven by the signalling renewals. Each scheme will be progressed on the strength of the business case benefits identified. Each business case takes into account patronage, journey time savings, economic, social, capacity, capability and industry performance benefits. Any assistance in supplying data etc. to support any of the above schemes would be most welcomed by Network Rail.
- 10.16 In relation to Walsall's ability to influence those programmes and possibly bring forward schemes. If Walsall thought the re-opening of Aldridge station was economically beneficial to the surrounding conurbation and could demonstrate

such economic benefits, Walsall may influence any decision by providing such data to support a stakeholders' case for re-opening. Any case brought before Network Rail would be seriously reviewed and supported (subject to industry business case benefits).

- 10.17 Centro, under the old franchise, specified the level of service provision, quality standards and fares through a franchise agreement with the Strategic Rail Authority (now the Department for Transport) and the National Express Group (as owner of Central Trains). Following enactment of the Railways Bill 2005, Centro will no longer have an automatic right to be a co-signatory to the new franchise. The rail grant which Centro currently receives to cover the cost for the franchise and other relevant costs will no longer be available in the current form. The extent to which Centro will be able to influence rail service provision under the new arrangements has yet to be determined.
- 10.18 Centro will be circulating its own Rail Development Plan for consultation during autumn of 2007 which will provide the opportunity to influence this key document.
- 10.19 The West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006 -11 identifies proposals to improve certain railway stations in the Metropolitan Area, and major rail Park and Ride and corridor enhancements. These include significant improvements to the Cannock Line.
- 10.20 The council will work with Centro, bus and rail operators to promote closer integration of bus and train timetables, as a real alternative to the car for commuting. Future investment will need to be channelled into infrastructure and service improvements to increase the attractiveness of rail. In the short term this could include increasing the supply of secure parking at stations, better shelters, kiosks, staffed booking offices, CCTV, better information, ticketing initiatives and the provision of bus/rail interchange facilities.

Electrification

- 10.21 The recently published White Paper "Delivering a Sustainable Railway" says that the case for network-wide electrification will be kept under review; it is not made yet. The Government is clear that the industry needs to take a pragmatic and progressive approach to electrification, determined on a case-by-case basis, driven by business and operational need. In the short term, the key question is whether the benefits of such investment over 10–15 years are greater than its costs, so that it pays for itself regardless of what the optimum longer-term carbon choices turn out to be. But the case for more strategic, or network-wide, electrification will also be kept under review in preparation for future investment programmes as future energy and generation technologies develop, so that rail can position itself to take advantage of the best long-term carbon choices.

Tram/Train Concept

- 10.22 The tram/train concept opens up exciting possibilities for expansion of the successful local rail and tram services in the West Midlands to areas currently poorly served by public transport. Tram/train is a simple concept in which light rail vehicles capable of running both on street tramway and railway lines are operated

with shared use of heavy rail corridors, effectively running “in between” heavy rail passenger or freight services. In Europe, this concept is used to facilitate access via suburban railway lines into the heart of city centres. Track sharing between light and heavy rail has been implemented in the UK on the Sunderland extension to Tyne and Wear Metro.

- 10.23 Network Rail has been actively promoting the tram/train concept to Passenger Transport Executives as a means of increasing patronage, renewing aging rolling stock and considerably reducing operating and maintenance costs. The imaginative and flexible use of the tram/train concept would open up a number of exciting possibilities to enhance public transport in the West Midlands by combining street-running suburban tramway with under-utilised rail lines to “bypass” difficult highway locations and provide rapid transport links that would not be possible without tram/train. This would not replace, but rather would supplement, the current plans for Midland Metro extensions and for rail expansion. However, there would be considerable further work needed before any of projects could be proved to be feasible or included in any programme of works.

11. WALSALL'S RAIL NETWORK TOMORROW

Birmingham New Street

11.1 Birmingham New Street station is the hub of most local services and the national rail network. Congestion at Birmingham New Street is the largest single item affecting the provision and reliability of rail services in the whole of the West Midlands, including Walsall. Its daily passenger flows, excluding through-passengers, make it the busiest station outside London. It currently has passenger capacity problems during busy periods. The local authorities in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area are working with DfT (Rail) to develop local and regional services, which offer sustainable travel in our Area, and on a Major Scheme to turn New Street Station into a Gateway that is worthy of the country's second city and which fully meets the needs of local people and long-distance travellers.

InterCity Services

11.2 The Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company have successfully applied to the Office of Rail Regulation to run a service between Wrexham and London. From March 2008, in the weekdays, it will be possible to access five trains per day in each direction between Tame Bridge Parkway and London Marylebone. The first in the day will leave Tamebridge at 07.15 and the last in the day will leave London at 20.03. There will be a reduced service at weekends. This will provide a highly competitive 2 hours 30 minute journey time from Tame Bridge Parkway, with just one intermediate stop at Banbury, and inter-city style comfort and facilities.

Bradford Place and Station Street

11.3 Bradford Place is envisaged as a major new public space, providing an additional retail focus linking the Saddlers Centre with the Victorian arcade and the Jerome Retail Park. The public realm will be remodelled to create an "urban interchange" for multi-modal public transport – Metro, bus and rail links – maximising the contribution of public transport provision to a vibrant town centre accessible to all of Walsall's diverse communities. Interchange between Bradford Place and St Paul's bus station is already difficult for people with a mobility difficulty on account of distance. To ensure accessibility, existing bus facilities and the rail station will be kept near to the core of the town centre.

Walsall Station

11.4 As part of the re-signalling project, the Network Rail Route Planning team has identified further enhancements, which are over and above that of the planned renewals, that may deliver either improved levels of performance or/and increased operating capacity/capability. Station enhancements are planned in 2011 and options include electrification of platform 2 and restoration of platform 3 to a through platform, dependent on a benefit to cost ratio of at least 2. Bi-directional signalling from platform 3 along the down fast to Pleck Junction is also being considered, which will add more operational flexibility at Walsall.

- 11.5 There are plans to upgrade Platform 1 entrance in Station Street. The provision of a ramp or lift from the station corridor down to platform 1 (to Hednesford) would greatly improve facilities for passengers. It has been suggested that the reinstatement of platform 4 is an aspiration which should be considered.
- 11.6 The construction of a chord Ryecroft to link the Sutton Park Line and the Chase Line would relieve congestion caused by freight traffic going back and forth through Walsall station. Almost all the coal trains serving Rugeley Power station currently run through Walsall from the Sutton Park Line, reverse at Bescot and then run back through Walsall to gain the Chase line. This is a major contributor to congestion at the station, as well as being wasteful of fuel and time. Network Rail has tentatively proposed creating a new chord at Ryecroft to permit trains to run directly from the Sutton Park Line onto the Chase line. This chord would have to run through the site of the former Ryecroft depot across part of what is planned to become Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve. Walsall council will work with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of such a chord. However, the proposed chord must not compromise the future development of the Walsall-Lichfield route.

Corridor: Birmingham – Walsall – Rugeley – Stafford

- 11.7 As part of the re-signalling project, the Network Rail Route Planning team has identified further enhancements, which are over and above that of the planned renewals, that may deliver either improved levels of performance or/and increased operating capacity/capability. These include various line and junction speed improvements, which are not part of the re-signalling scheme, along the Cannock Chase line and Walsall Power Signal Box area.
- 11.8 With proposals to segregate Walsall from the West Coast Mainline at Stafford it is vital that connections are maintained to InterCity services at Birmingham New Street. This is imperative for a large urban area that depends on good strategic communications as an essential prerequisite for a healthy economy.
- 11.9 With the growing capacity problems at New Street, and no rail capacity increases proposed in the New Street development, there has been a suggestion that some Walsall to Birmingham trains could be diverted into Snow Hill in order to free up capacity at New Street Station. This would require new tracks (the Benson Road chord) costing in excess of £45m. Presently, Network Rail does not support such a scheme and the site is protected for a possible Soho Station.
- 11.10 The hourly, semi-fast train from Birmingham will stop at Tamebridge Parkway, Walsall, Bloxwich, Bloxwich North, Landywood, Cannock, Hednesford, Rugeley Town and Rugeley Trent Valley, where through passengers can connect with a new hourly semi-fast service between London and Crewe on the West Coast Main Line. Everything possible needs to be done to ensure that the services that will replace the direct Walsall service through to Stafford will provide good connections to and from Stafford and Rugeley Trent Valley, and that connections into and out of Rugeley Trent Valley services in the London direction are equally good.

- 11.11 Discussions are taking place between Govia and Centro to discuss the possibility of an enhanced half hourly off-peak service between Walsall and Hednesford.
- 11.12 Cannock Chase District Council has previously expressed its concerns about the proposed withdrawal of the through service to Stafford. In reality, the proposed Rugeley Trent Valley interchange to Stafford will effectively end the market as passengers expect through journey opportunities, particularly for relatively short journeys. Cannock Chase District Council suggest that one of the reasons for withdrawing the Rugeley Town-Stafford service was the relatively slow 75 mph speed of the 150 units on the West Coast Main Line. However, the availability of 100 mph rolling stock could be used as a lever to retain the Stafford service, particularly as the infrastructure issues in terms of an additional signal to allow the half-hourly off-peak service between Hednesford-Walsall, are still to be resolved.
- 11.13 Bescot Stadium Station falls within the Bloxwich, Birchills, Bescot Regeneration Corridor of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy where employment land will be released for housing. The station is actually in Sandwell, although the car park is in Walsall.
- 11.14 Access to Bescot Stadium Station is a top priority. Our aspiration is to have Bescot Station fully accessible to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This is the only station on the Birmingham-Rugeley Town line without ramped or lift access.
- 11.15 Good access to Bescot Station is needed both from the Walsall side and also the Wednesbury side with its proposed major industrial development. The football stadium, conference facilities and new hotel make a strong case for better facilities at the station to encourage sustainable travel.
- 11.16 We would, ideally, want all 4 trains per hour stopping at Bescot Stadium Station (currently 2) with a major Park & Ride facility to serve Walsall and Birmingham.
- 11.17 Extra parking at Walsall Football Club on Mondays-Fridays could be investigated as a quid pro-quo arrangement for an existing one that has been brokered with Walsall FC Supporters Club, enabling supporters to use the station car park on match days.
- 11.18 At Bescot, the current 'up' platform is boxed in by a junction either side. Network Rail plans to relocate the junction and associated re-signalling as part of the renewals in 2011/12 to allow for future platform lengthening. The new Wrexham to Marylebone service will stop at Tamebridge. Discussions have taken place with the Wrexham, Shropshire Marylebone Rail Company who have agreed to consider stopping at Bescot when platform length can accommodate their trains.
- 11.19 Bloxwich falls within the Bloxwich, Birchills, Bescot Regeneration Corridor of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy where employment land will be released for housing.
- 11.20 The Bloxwich area of North Walsall is served by two stations a mere 600 metres apart. There is a strong case for relocating the Bloxwich station 250 metres southwards to the original Station Street site away from the unfriendly and

insecure environment. The Council takes the view that if the Bloxwich station were to be re-sited closer to Bloxwich District Centre it would not only help to maintain the centre's vitality and viability (an objective of planning guidance) but tap into a greater residential catchment, increasing patronage. Accordingly, the Unitary Development Plan, Policy BX9, indicates a suitable location to construct a re-sited station. This site offers ground level all-round visibility, scope for a ticket office and a greater opportunity for parking than the current location

- 11.21 The Strategic Regeneration Framework supports the relocation of Bloxwich Railway Station. The Cannock Chase Rail Promotion Group fully supports any plan to move Bloxwich Station nearer to its original site and out of the deep cutting which presently can feel very intimidating and remote to customers waiting for trains, especially on dark winter evenings. However, Network Rail and Centro say that, due to signalling and track constraint/standards, this site is not ideal and will be costly. A strong business case must be proved to support any relocation.
- 11.22 As a result of losing Class 150 rolling stock to Arriva Trains Wales, from May 2007 Central Trains has secured nine class 170 diesel units to use between Walsall and Rugeley and some additional Class 321 electric units to use between Walsall and Birmingham. The revised timetable to utilise these includes more capacity to reduce overcrowding, but two trains from Hednesford to Birmingham will be severed at Walsall with cross platform interchange (and 5 minute connection time). Concerns were raised over the loss of significant peak-hour through journeys, and Centro acknowledged that the change is regrettable but was the 'least worse' option. In partial compensation one train will now operate through to Wolverhampton. The situation results from the Rolling Stock Leasing Company's enhanced commercial interest following the award of a 12 year franchise in Wales compared to just 7 years for West Midlands.
- 11.23 Centro's long-term vision for the Birmingham – Walsall route would be to increase the core frequency up to six trains per hour from New Street, if capacity is freed up by the construction of the Bordesley Chords. This could then potentially facilitate a combination of half-hourly services to Birmingham from Rugeley, Wolverhampton and Aldridge via Walsall.
- 11.24 The proposed Cannock Chase Line Rail Showcase is a Metropolitan Area Priority scheme, which aims to upgrade the line between Walsall to Rugeley Town. Improvements will include CCTV in key areas; upgraded lighting, signs and shelters; renewed passenger help points; disabled facilities; expanded Park & ride and longer platforms for six-car trains and new staffed booking offices at Cannock and Hednesford. It will improve links to services such as buses, cycling and walking. It will also complement Network Rail's re-signalling of the whole of the Cannock line in 2012 and proposed 5 minute headways (NB. Headway is the amount of time that elapses between two vehicles passing the same point travelling in the same direction on a given route).
- 11.25 The Chase Line could be a diversionary route for Birmingham to Manchester services, but not for timetabled ones due to non-electrification, line speed restrictions and Stafford remodelling proposals.

- 11.26 We would want to see the electrification of the sixteen mile link between Walsall and Rugeley Trent Valley, together with other improvements to track and signalling, which would allow the introduction of a faster, more frequent, passenger rail service with an enhanced passenger environment. This would enable the rail operator to make more efficient use of the existing electric train fleet and offer greater train capacity to relieve over-crowding. Electrification would also integrate the line more effectively in Centro's strategy for future service development. In 1999, Railtrack conducted a pre-feasibility study into the electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley route section.
- 11.27 Electrification of the Walsall-Rugeley line and Kidsgrove-Crewe line would provide an opportunity for the development of through services between Birmingham, Walsall, Stoke-on-Trent, Crewe, Liverpool and the north. This alternative route would have the potential for relieving Wolverhampton-Stafford and the slow lines between Stafford and Crewe.
- 11.28 Network Rail will examine the feasibility of increasing the current line speed from 45 mph to 65 mph (except Bloxwich Crossing and Rugeley Power Station Junction – known as Brereton). Further increases in speeds are an aspiration.
- 11.29 Almost all the coal trains serving Rugeley Power station currently run through Walsall from the Sutton Park Line, reverse at Bescot and then run back through Walsall to gain the Chase line. This is a major contributor to congestion at the station, as well as being wasteful of fuel and time. Network Rail has tentatively proposed creating a new chord at Ryecroft to permit trains to run directly from the Sutton Park Line onto the Chase line. However, this chord would have to run through the site of the former Ryecroft depot across part of what is planned to become Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve. Walsall council will work with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of such a chord. However, the proposed chord must not compromise the future development of the Walsall-Lichfield route.
- 11.30 Any upgrade to the route would increase its usefulness as a potential diversionary route for freight and passenger services. In particular, if linked to (Coventry-) Nuneaton – Water Orton – Ryecroft Junction electrification, it would increase the potential of the line to accommodate enhanced local and long distance passenger services. This could include a second Birmingham-Manchester route via Walsall and Rugeley , as proposed in the MidMan study.

Corridor: Wolverhampton - Walsall - Sutton Coldfield

- 11.31 We will investigate, with Centro and Govia, if a 30 minute interval Wolverhampton - Walsall - New St - Wolverhampton triangular service might be practical, using some of the long layover that exists at Wolverhampton. In principle, Network Rail supports such a service. However, they would need to performance model the proposed timetable prior to its operation. They may also require (under the Wolverhampton re-signalling) an additional south facing bay platform. The congested layout and flat crossover outside Wolverhampton station are also constraints. The service outlined above, and infrastructure improvements to increase station and track capacity, is strongly supported by Wolverhampton City Council.

- 11.32 The line passes through the Darlaston – Willenhall – Wednesfield Regeneration corridor, focusing new employment investment and housing growth in strategic centres and along transport corridors. It aims to maximum use of redundant industrial land and premises in the area. The retention of this service and at least one intermediate station at Willenhall is strongly supported by Wolverhampton City Council. The service is seen as important in maintaining sustainable transport links across the Black Country, particularly as road traffic, including buses, incur considerable delay on the A454 where it crosses the M6 motorway at Junction 10.
- 11.33 A Willenhall New Station Study was conducted on behalf of Centro in 2000. Its recommendation was that the station should be constructed since it has the potential to pay for itself within 10 years. With the pressing need to reduce the national carbon footprint it is time to reassess the business case for the reinstatement of Willenhall Station. As a matter of priority, the Council will consider how best it can work with Centro and other partners to develop a railway station to serve the Willenhall District Centre. This should include provision for interchange with other public transport modes and park and ride. Centro already owns land at the site of Willenhall station and this is protected by the Unitary Development Plan, Policy WH5.
- 11.34 There may also be potential for a station serving the Darlaston Strategic Development Area, which is the focus of an emerging Regeneration Framework. A business case would have to be made and local funding levered in.
- 11.35 There is also potential for a station at Pleck which has a substantial surrounding residential catchment. A business case would have to be made and local funding levered in.
- 11.36 Almost all the coal trains serving Rugeley Power station currently run through Walsall from the Sutton Park Line, reverse at Bescot and then run back through Walsall to access the Chase line. This is a major contributor to congestion at the station, as well as being wasteful of fuel and time. Network Rail has tentatively proposed creating a new chord at Ryecroft to permit trains to run directly from the Sutton Park Line onto the Chase line. However, this chord would have to run through the site of the former Ryecroft depot across part of what is planned to become Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve. Walsall council will work with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of such a chord. However, the proposed chord must not compromise the future development of the Walsall-Lichfield route.
- 11.37 The Sutton Park Line is currently a Freight only route. Railtrack has, in the past, investigated the feasibility of electrification of the Nuneaton - Water Orton - Walsall line to create an alternative freight artery for traffic currently routed via the Coventry Corridor.
- 11.38 We would want to see the electrification of the Sutton Park Line, together with other improvements to track and signalling, and the re-introduction of passenger rail services. Electrification would also enable the integration of the line more effectively in Centro's strategy for future service development.

- 11.39 Electrification of the Sutton Park Line through to Nuneaton, ideally linked with Walsall-Rugeley electrification and the construction and electrification of a Ryecroft chord, would provide a major strategic freight route including scope for diverted passenger services.
- 11.40 Re-instatement of platform 3 at Walsall station as a through line could lead to a new station at Aldridge and a Wolverhampton-Walsall-Aldridge service.
- 11.41 The Unitary Development Plan, Policy AL6, protects this site. The Council considers that, as a residential commuter area, this line would produce good passenger figures for people wishing to travel by train from Streetly and Aldridge to Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham, whilst providing relief for the local road system. The Strategic Regeneration Framework supports a new railway station at Aldridge. With the pressing need to reduce the national carbon footprint, we will work with Govia, Centro and Birmingham City Council into determining the feasibility of reopening the Aldridge station.
- 11.42 Centro own land for a station in Aldridge and outline planning permission was granted in 2000 for a rail station and park & ride on land at Anchor Meadow, but this has now lapsed. There is an extant agreement with Central Trains whereby, should the Aldridge Station have been built within the lifetime of the soon-to-finish franchise, Central Trains would have extended the Walsall-Wolverhampton service out to Aldridge. We will hold talks with Govia to discuss similar proposals.
- 11.43 As part of the re-signalling project, the Network Rail Route Planning team has identified further enhancements, which are over and above that of the planned renewals, that may deliver either improved levels of performance or/and increased operating capacity/capability. We will hold talks with Network Rail to ensure that signalling and crossover facility will enable the opening of a station in Aldridge.
- 11.44 There is also potential for a re-opened station near the borough border at Streetly, which has substantial surrounding residential catchments. A business case would have to be developed.
- 11.45 Birmingham City Council protects the line via Sutton Park and Walmley and aspires to the reintroduction of passenger services on the existing freight-only line serving Minworth, Walmley and Sutton Coldfield. It supports the Streetly and Aldridge reopening through to Wolverhampton, with connections at Walsall into Birmingham.
- 11.46 Network Rail has been actively promoting the tram/train concept to Passenger Transport Executives as a means of increasing patronage, renewing aging rolling stock and considerably reducing operating and maintenance costs. We would urge Network Rail and Centro to consider the Sutton Park Line re-opening to passenger services by the introduction of tram/train trackshare with rail freight and passenger services on the Derby line into Birmingham City Centre from Aldridge, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, Walmley and Castle Vale/Minworth.
- 11.47 Walsall Council, Birmingham City Council and Centro have recognised the potential of the railway lines between Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and Walsall

for carrying passenger services, but a previous assessment undertaken in 1996 had not shown sufficient potential usage to re-open the line to passenger services. A jointly funded study will be conducted to review the demand for such a service. This study will also consider Network Rail infrastructure changes, plans for Bordesley Chords and proposals for Tamworth Line. It will need to review freight capacity on these corridors and assess the potential impact re-opening the Stourbridge - Walsall and Walsall - Lichfield lines might have on freight flows.

Corridor: Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield

- 11.48 This route is a strategic rail link at the hub of the West Midlands rail network. The line runs from Worcester via the Black Country to Derby, and takes in towns such as Droitwich, Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Dudley, Wednesbury, Walsall, Pelsall, Brownhills, Lichfield and Burton.
- 11.49 The Black Country has very poor rail connections to the north-east and south-west for what is a population unit in excess of 1 million (i.e. more than Birmingham). The Stourbridge/Dudley area has the lowest car ownership levels in the West Midlands (Government Statistics, 2001). If passenger services were to be restored to the line, many people would in consequence not need to change trains at Birmingham New Street's increasingly crowded platforms, or to go there to catch a train.
- 11.50 Not only could the line provide for through services from Worcester to Derby and points north via the Black Country. It could, in time, provide for services to other major population centres off the line, enabling people all over the region to have a wider array of potential destinations that they could reach by rail. It would connect people who do not have a car to job opportunities beyond the local labour market and help to regenerate local town centres, such as Brownhills.
- 11.51 The Lichfield to Stourbridge Passenger Demand Study (2001) was commissioned by Centro/WMPTA. The Study said that there was a prospect of the line breaking even in 2021. It also stated that the inclusion of non-user benefits (i.e. the effects of transfers from cars) could offset the operating deficit. It concluded that, in view of the potentially wide social and economic benefits it had identified, the rail corridor should be safeguarded and recommended that a thorough economic and social appraisal be carried out.
- 11.52 The best option for restoring this line is to develop it, initially, as a freight route. The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), in its Land Use Planning Guide, specifically mentioned the Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield line as an example of a capacity improvement necessary to provide for future growth. The SRA stated in its previous planning documents that it wished to reopen the Stourbridge to Walsall section as a freight avoiding line for Birmingham, presumably as a first step. The logical extension of this would be to re-open the line between Walsall and Lichfield in order to gain the greatest benefits towards justifying the restoration of passenger services. Railfreight operators have recognised this and have strongly supported the Council's rail policies in this regard. However the SRA Route Utilisation Strategy was silent on the potential contribution of this important route, notwithstanding its previous support for the restoration of freight and its own Land Use Planning Guide.

- 11.53 The recently published White Paper “Delivering a Sustainable Railway” make reference to the creation of a Strategic Freight Network and allocates £200m to its development. This may offer an opportunity to fund the Stourbridge to Walsall route as a first phase in the reinstatement of the Stourbridge to Derby route. The potential for the route will also be fully investigated as part of Network Rail’s new Route Utilisation Strategy for the region, which is due to start later this year.
- 11.54 There are significant freight flows on the route between Bristol and the West Midlands. These currently use the main line between Bristol and Birmingham which includes the Lickey incline, the steepest gradient on the English main line network. This presents a major restriction to freight on the weight of trains and therefore the length of the trains. The line is also a busy passenger route. Reopening the Stourbridge to Walsall line would provide an alternative route which would avoid the Lickey incline and would also reduce freight trains movements on a main passenger route.
- 11.55 For environmental reasons, a business case could be made for the reinstatement of the Stourbridge – Lichfield line as the missing link in the SW-NE freight route.
- 11.56 On the Walsall to Stourbridge section, the Council will safeguard land for rail use and promote jointly with Centro and the rail operators the restoration of line for freight and passenger services, possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby and beyond.
- 11.57 The line needs to be reopened to Lichfield to meet the aspirations of the freight operators. Stourbridge to Burton would be a valuable freight diversion route for Kings Norton to Tamworth as it would relieve the Camp Hill and Landor Street to Water Orton routes where Birmingham CC has aspirations for local passenger services.
- 11.58 Electrification of this reinstated line through to Lichfield would complement the Birmingham – Sutton – Lichfield service.
- 11.59 On a more local level, the restoration of train services would ameliorate traffic conditions on the A461 between Walsall and Brownhills, and provide greater accessibility to Walsall and Birmingham for people without the use of a car. It could therefore contribute to the overall efficiency of the network as well as being in tune with wider transport and regeneration objectives. There continues to be strong public support from residents to reopen the line and there are significant flows towards Walsall from the large town of Burntwood, just over the county border.
- 11.60 There is a large commuter base of people travelling to Birmingham from the Chasetown and Burntwood area. The potential of Park and Ride locations should be investigated, such as the former Charrington’s Oil depot north of Brownhills, which is now used as an HGV parking area.
- 11.61 In view of the potential for the re-opening of the Walsall to Lichfield railway for heavy rail and/or tram-train, and the proposed major housing/leisure development of Silver Street in Brownhills, the Unitary Development Plan Policy BR10

promotes the provision of a “transport interchange” at the northern end of Silver Street.

- 11.62 The council, in its Unitary Development Plan Policy T3, has safeguarded the rail formation between Ryecroft, Walsall and Brownhills as part of a strategically important route for the future. Centro and Walsall MBC are jointly undertaking a multi-modal review of this Walsall-Brownhills corridor, which is considered a Metropolitan Area Priority. Options being considered are heavy rail, light rail, ultra light rail (Parry People Mover), bus rapid transit (BRT) and upgraded bus priority. The first stage of the study has been completed. The council will part fund the ongoing investigation to develop a short-term public transport use for this corridor.
- 11.63 Network rail would only support a lightweight tram along this former trackbed provided heavy rail was installed, the infrastructure was maintained, it was not connected to the mainline and that Network Rail retained the line for future use at any time. There would also be the need for a suite of legal agreements / arrangements which the operator would need to fund.
- 11.64 Network Rail has been actively promoting the tram/train concept to Passenger Transport Executives as a means of increasing patronage, renewing aging rolling stock and considerably reducing operating and maintenance costs. We would urge Network Rail and Centro to consider the feasibility of a Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield tram/train trackshare with rail freight.
- 11.65 The potential of other Park and Ride locations should be investigated, such as the Charrington’s Oil depot north of Brownhills, which is now used as an HGV parking area.
- 11.66 Network Rail has tentatively proposed creating a new chord at Ryecroft to permit trains to run directly from the Sutton Park Line onto the Chase line. However, the proposed chord must not compromise the future development of the Walsall-Lichfield route. Walsall council will work with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of such a chord also serving a potential Walsall-Lichfield reinstated line, enabling freight trains to move between three lines. Network Rail say that provisions will be made in the signalling interlocking on the other lines to accommodate any re-opening of the Brownhills route.

Integrated Transport

- 11.67 Good quality rail services (linked to Park and Ride facilities) offer a significant potential for longer distance commuters; in particular those who choose to use public transport for all or part of their journey instead of driving.
- 11.68 Passengers’ journeys do not usually start and end at a railway station. Passengers arrive at the station and leave from it to their final destination in a number of ways. Railways are in effect modal hubs and several agencies have a part to play in ensuring ease of interchange between modes through physical environment, information, timetabling and through ticketing. Centro has a key role in this integration.

Buses

11.69 Bus travel offers perhaps the greatest opportunity for interchange improvement. At the present time, there is very little integration of bus/rail services and what does occur is largely of an unplanned or coincidental nature. This is a reflection of the way bus services in particular have operated under the deregulated environment introduced under the Transport Act, 1985. There is a need to focus on the interchange facilities at stations. For instance, are bus stops provided and are they situated in the optimum position, are the walking routes from the bus stop to the railway station clearly signed and is the link secure and well lit? The council will liaise with public transport users, Centro and bus operators to identify where there is scope for tying rail and bus timetables into a tighter, mutually supportive arrangement.

Cars/motorbikes

11.70 It is a fact that for many passengers, driving to the station remains the most viable and practical means of travel. The increasing length of a working day and the shift towards a '24-7' week means that it is hard to provide a comprehensive rail/bus service that meets the needs of commuters and/or weekend travellers. Fears over personal security also inhibit the use of alternative transport or walking. For these reasons, parking facilities at stations remain important. Scope for enlarging existing parking facilities at stations will be investigated.

Taxis

11.71 Taxis (both Hackney carriages and private hire) provide important links to and from the railway station, particularly for people with disabilities. The council will encourage co-ordination between train companies and taxi firms.

Bicycles

11.72 Rail should be seen as the core of an integrated transport system and cycling has a part within this system. There is a strong synergy between cycling and rail. Used in combination, they provide one of the most environmentally friendly options for travel to work. This form of commuting is likely to expand as concern about climate change grows. It is in the railway's commercial and environmental interests to facilitate this.

11.73 The Strategic Rail Authority's Cycling Policy consultation document stated that only 2% of passengers used bicycles to access stations. This low figure suggests that there is a significant potential for growth. Cycling to the station helps to reduce road congestion improves health and is a totally self-reliant form of transport. However, to convince people to cycle, there needs to be adequate provision for access and secure storage must be provided at stations. Trains should have more "bike on train" storage facilities. The combination of bike and train allows door-to-door journeys that would otherwise only be possible by car.

11.74 Centro is reviewing cycle provision at stations and we will liaise with them to ensure that the facilities are located in convenient and attractive locations. There is scope at Walsall station, with nearly a million passengers, to increase the level

of cycle storage provision which is currently two bicycle lockers and two stands which are hidden away in a dark and isolated part of the station where vandalism can and does occur.

Walking

11.75 The council will work with train operators, Centro, and the police to ensure the best possible provisions for pedestrians at the station and surrounding areas. This includes way-marking, well-maintained and direct walking routes, crossing provision on major roads, good lighting and security measures.

Accessibility

11.76 Accessibility covers everyone's ability to use the network with ease. All passengers at some time find themselves encumbered: for instance because of a permanent physical or mental impairment, a temporary impairment (e.g. broken leg), by being accompanied by young children, or simply through carrying luggage. All these factors are an impediment to an easy journey. It is the natural aspiration of all disabled people to travel without assistance.

11.77 Improving access and facilities for disabled people will benefit not only those with disabilities but also families with young children and older people with mobility problems. Much of the problem lies in stations that were simply not built with the disabled people in mind and the scale of the problem is such that it may take years to improve access radically and therefore requires long-term commitment. With our ageing population, the number of passengers with disabilities using railways will increase. The number of locations and range of facilities available to enhance accessibility must grow likewise.

11.78 Mainly due to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority insistence, and in advance of DDA requirements, the Walsall – Birmingham and the Hednesford stations to Rugeley Town are mostly accessible. The Cannock Chase Line Rail Showcase will upgrade other stations north of Walsall.

11.79 We will liaise with Centro and Network rail to ensure that Bescot Station is made DDA compliant. To date, there has not been a business case for doing so. There is potential for increased footfall at this station given the proximity to the Football Club with its conference facilities and adjoining hotel. The proposed major industrial development on the Wednesbury side of the station could generate more passengers. Network Rail resignalling scheme in 2011 will enable the lengthening of platforms which could pave the way for trains on the Wrexham to Marylebone route stopping here.

11.80 We will work with Walsall Disability Forum and other relevant groups to ensure that their concerns are redressed

Standby Services

11.81 In the West Midlands area there is currently just one train which is on standby should another train be out of use. As the number of services increase, then we would ask for a second train to be made available for use in emergencies.

12. FREIGHT

- 12.1 Rail remained the primary transport system for goods until the second half of the last century, when road transport started to gain a serious market share. Rail's market share suffered substantial decline as a result of network rationalisation in the 1960s, followed by subsequent decades of under-investment in the network that remained. The development of the UK motorway system and the de-regulation of road freight led to the inexorable rise in road transport, and the inevitable decline in the use of rail for freight and passengers.
- 12.2 The West Midlands is at the crossroads of the InterCity rail network and it is also important for through freight movements between the north west and south/south east as well as north east to south west and South Wales. The West Midlands has some of the most congested road and rail routes in the country and yet millions of tonnes of goods have to be delivered in, or moved through, the region each day. Without immediate investment in regional infrastructure, transport and economic growth will grind to a halt and the region will face total gridlock. Significant environmental benefits can be derived from increased movement of goods by rail. Economic issues have become increasingly important, as witnessed by the Working Time Directive, which is expected to exacerbate the growing shortage of lorry drivers.
- 12.3 The fast route to reducing transport's carbon footprint is to increase rail freight which also acts as a freight by-pass and helps reduce road congestion. Recent research has shown that a tonne of freight moved by rail creates five times less Carbon Dioxide than the same tonne being moved on the roads. Rail freight is also up to fifteen times better than road in terms of other noxious emissions. There is only a five to fifteen year window in which to take action to avert catastrophic climate change. As Stern said, "The scientific evidence is overwhelming. Climate change presents serious global risks and it demands an urgent global response".
- 12.4 The current rail network imposes a number of limitations on freight traffic. One significant constraint is the relatively tight loading gauge, which restricts the rolling stock that can operate. This is most pronounced in the container market, since only a small part of the rail network can accommodate the taller containers that are increasingly used in world trade. Nor does the existing infrastructure readily lend itself to the operation of longer trains, a problem made worse by the configuration of many freight terminals. Weight and speed limitations further constrain freight capacity.
- 12.5 Government's long-term rail strategy recognises rail freight's role in servicing the economy and offering a low carbon freight transport solution, in line with the recommendations of both the Stern and Eddington reports. The Government wants to see the development of a Strategic Freight Network. This would provide an enhanced core freight trunk network, optimised to freight requirements and providing greater capability, reliability and availability. This will benefit passengers, as well as freight services. The Government will work with the industry to develop and facilitate the delivery of the Strategic Freight Network, for which £200 million of Network Rail investment has been identified in the period to 2014.

12.6 The Freight Route Utilisation Strategy (Freight RUS) presents a view of the freight growth and alterations in existing traffic flows that could reasonably be expected to occur on the network by 2015 and presents a strategy to address the key issues that arise in accommodating these changes.

The Challenges for Freight in the Walsall Area

12.7 Walsall's rail system has enough capacity to form part of a rail freight network that would not only provide for modal switch from road to rail but also avoid the seriously congested passenger rail interchange in central Birmingham, thus delivering major strategic advantages for reliability of both passenger and freight services in the wider area. But, inevitably, there will be conflict between balancing the needs of passengers versus freight, of local versus inter-city services.

12.8 The Sutton Park Line remains one of the busiest freight lines in the region with up to 30 movements each way per day. Timetabled freight paths in January 2005 were 102 per day. Unlike passenger services, there is often a large difference between the booked (or reserved) freight paths and the number actually used on any particular day. Some flows are seasonal; others only currently operate for 3 days a week (or less); but the operators often book the paths for 6 days in the expectation of gaining additional business. Some paths are literally used 'on demand' with flows of coal switching on almost a daily basis between different sources at the customers' request. Others are planned for up to five times a day; but normally only used for three trips.

12.9 There are also paths reserved for passenger trains returning to or arriving from the depot - empty stock movements. Getting the first two passenger trains for the Chase Line service to Walsall in the morning from Wolverhampton Depot is a particular problem as this is also a busy time for freight movements.

12.10 Almost all the coal trains serving Rugeley Power station currently run through Walsall Station from the Sutton Park Line, reverse at Bescot and then run back through Walsall to gain the Chase line. The installation of a flue gas desulphurisation plant at Rugeley Power Station will lead to 7-10 additional freight trains a week, moving limestone in and gypsum out of the site, in addition to the existing coal trains. These freight trains are a major contributor to congestion at the station, as well as being wasteful of fuel and time.

The Opportunities for Freight in the Walsall Area

12.11 Network Rail has identified the growth requirements in the Walsall area - detailed in their Freight Route Utilisation Strategy - and aims to meet the freight operators' requirements. This commitment has been demonstrated through, for example; the Sutton Park planning headway improvement scheme (the headway between vehicles is the amount of time that elapses between two vehicles passing the same point travelling in the same direction on a given route). They are improving the planning headways along the Sutton Park line from 10 mins to 5 mins. (Note - headways to the east section of the line are currently controlled by Saltley Power Signal Box, will also be improved to 5 mins as part of the Water Orton re-signalling scheme 2009).

- 12.12 Network Rail is undertaking a proactive approach to gauge enhancement to allow greater access to the network for the increasingly common high cube W10 containers (through replacement of higher structures or lowering of the track). This will enable the rail industry to carry a significant volume of traffic that would otherwise be carried by road. In Walsall, the Sutton Line has been identified to benefit from gauge improvements.
- 12.13 We believe that freight gauge improvements and line speed on the Chase Line as well as Sutton Park Line should also be considered. The Chase Line would be a diversionary route for Birmingham to Manchester services, but not for timetabled ones due to non-electrification, line speed restrictions and Stafford remodelling proposals.
- 12.14 The Route Planning team within Network Rail has identified enhancements that may deliver either improved levels of performance or/and increased operating capacity/capability. These enhancement schemes may possibly be funded from the Network Rail Discretionary but each scheme must have a justifiable industry business case, with a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least 2. Additional freight related enhancement schemes that Route Planning team have identified, which are over and above that of the planned renewals, are as follows:
- Re-signalling of the Walsall Power Signal Box (PSB) area - the expected commissioning date is late 2011. The signalling renewal date is staged, based on life of asset and steady migration of signalling into the West Midlands Signalling Centre.
 - Line and junction speed improvements – various line speed improvements (not part of the re-signalling scheme) along the Cannock Line (2012) and Walsall Power Signal Box area.
 - Pleck Junction run-round facility – to provide a freight run round facility on the old track formation towards Round Oak. This removes the need for freight services to cross the mainline at Bescot Junction to reverse in Bescot freight yard.
 - Direct access to Bescot up yard by providing a facing crossover from the down Grand Junction line into the 'Up' yard at Bescot (Newton Junction).
- 12.15 Walsall Council is working with Network Rail to investigate the feasibility of building a Ryecroft Chord. The Chord would join the Sutton Park Line to the Chase Line and remove the need for reversing freight traffic going back and forth through Walsall station and have a significant impact on reducing its carbon footprint. We will also investigate the feasibility of linking in the Walsall-Brownhills route into this Chord.
- 12.16 There are significant freight flows on the route between Bristol and the West Midlands. These currently use the main line between Bristol and Birmingham which includes the Lickey incline, a steep gradient. This presents a large restriction to freight on the weight of trains and therefore the length of the trains. The line is also a busy passenger route.

- 12.17 Reopening the Stourbridge to Walsall line would provide an alternative route. By using this route the trains avoid the Lickey incline; the steepest gradient on the English main line network. It would also reduce freight trains movements on a main passenger route. The longer trains the route could accommodate would allow more goods to be transported for each train, allowing rail to grow with the Bristol ports. It would also allow rail to capture expansion in the South Wales ports.
- 12.18 Stourbridge to Burton would also be a valuable freight diversion route for Kings Norton to Tamworth as it would relieve the Camp Hill and Landor Street to Water Orton routes where Birmingham CC has aspirations for passenger services. There are also strong passenger flows from Burntwood through to Birmingham.
- 12.19 The “Delivering a Sustainable Railway” White Paper makes reference to the creation of a Strategic Freight Network and allocates £200m to its development. This may offer an opportunity to fund the Stourbridge – Walsall route. The potential for the route will also be fully investigated as part of Network Rail’s new Route Utilisation Strategy for the region which is due to start later this year.

Terminals and Private Sidings

- 12.20 The expansion of existing rail freight facilities in the borough, and at Bescot in Sandwell, are supported in principle by the council, subject to detailed consideration of issues relating to road access and environmental impact.
- 12.21 Terminals provide the key interface between rail freight services, other modes of transport and/or storage facilities. They can vary enormously in size and scope, from a simple siding through to large distribution parks. Development of a new terminal need not be a permanent, costly or time-consuming project. It may be possible to commence rail services through a terminal with basic facilities.
- 12.22 UDP Policy JP3: Rail-served Sites, protects land or buildings which have potential to be served by rail, and the Council will encourage their use for activities incorporating rail freight, e.g. Friars Road.

Present and potential Rail Freight Terminals

- Bescot complex
- Tasker Street (Walsall),
- European Metals Recycling (Darlaston - plans now on hold),
- Bloxwich (Trident Alloys)
- Bowmur/Maersk Mid-Cannock Container depot (Cannock Chase District) for which a rail connection on the Chase Line is planned.
- Bowmur/Maersk Anglesea Depot (the former Charrington’s Oil Depot)

13. POLICY CONTEXT

- 13.1 The Government's 1998 Transport White Paper '**A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone**' and the daughter document, 'Sustainable Distribution: A Strategy'
- 13.2 **The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy** (RSS) sets the broad strategic framework for planning in the West Midlands region. It contains policies about the general patterns of development in the built up areas and the countryside across the region. It aims to improve significantly the region's transport systems and to promote the integration of all forms of transport and land-use planning leading to a better, more efficient transport system.
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=244>
- 13.3 The RSS contains the **Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)** which, in turn, reflects Government Guidance and the plans of the Highways Agency and the former Strategic Rail Authority. Policy T10 (Freight) of the RSS deals specifically with freight issues. It stresses the efficient movement of freight is a key component of a successful regional economy. In particular, it encourages a greater use of rail freight.
- 13.4 **Network Rail's Freight Route Utilisation Strategy** (March 2007) sets out a detailed analysis of freight issues, requirements and proposals for accommodating growth. The strategy incorporates the Department for Transport's (DfT) Regional Planning Assessments by providing national rail-specific proposals, and analysing freight flows which affect the Region. The productivity element of the Transport Innovation Fund also provides a potential funding stream to enhance the network and a number of major freight enhancement schemes are under consideration.
- 13.5 **The West Midlands Regional Freight Strategy** complements the Freight Route Utilisation Strategy, and seeks to support national and regional objectives for the sustainable, economic and efficient movement of goods within, to and from the region. The Strategy has been developed in partnership with many stakeholders and identifies key issues that need to be addressed, including the reliability of the road network, 'bottlenecks' on the roads and railways and the lack of adequate loading gauges to enable more freight on strategic rail routes. The freight strategy will not only underpin the development and maintenance of an integrated, efficient and sustainable freight policy in the region, but will also stimulate economic growth and increase inward investment.
- 13.6 **West Midlands Local Transport Plan** sets out the programme of transport improvements across the whole Metropolitan Area, including the Black Country, up to 2011. These proposals aim to stem the rise of congestion whilst delivering good accessibility for all and improved road safety and air quality. The objectives are to:
- ensure that the transport system underpins the economic revitalisation of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area

- ensure that transport contributes towards social inclusion by increasing accessibility for everyone
- move towards a more sustainable pattern of development and growth
- improve safety and health for all
- integrate all forms of transport with each other, with other land uses, and other policies and priorities

13.7 **The West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2004 – 2010 (RES)** ‘*Delivering Advantage*’, was published in 2004. The RES identifies 13 challenges that must be overcome. Five have been given highest priority because they bear the greatest influence on realising the vision. The Transport Challenge is one of the high priority challenges. And is identified because:

- *‘Despite a pivotal position in the national network providing significant location advantages, inadequacies in the region’s transport infrastructure have a major negative impact on the regional economy, and adversely affect the choices people make about where to live and work;*
- *Traffic congestion is a fact of daily life in all major urban areas, with conditions throughout the day increasingly reflecting those of peak hours, a situation exacerbated by inadequate public transport. Congestion in the West Midlands motorway box (M6 / M42 and M5) is now a national issue with extensive delays increasingly commonplace;*
- *Accessibility to, and within, rural parts of the region, especially to the west, is poor;*
- *Birmingham New Street station is constrained by line and platform capacity and there are capacity constraints on the West Coast Main Line, particularly the two-track line between Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton; and*
- *Our challenge is, through close and energetic partnership, to find innovative solutions, and create a safe, sustainable, world-class transport system which supports our regional economy.’*

http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/Images/economic-strategy-overview_tcm9-2615.pdf

13.8 The RES directs its resources to **Regeneration Zones (RZs)** and High Technology Corridors (HTCs). RZs encompass concentrations of need and include the 10% most deprived wards in the region, as well as most of the bottom 20%. The key aim is to increase economic activity and employment levels within these wards and strengthen links between areas of need and areas of opportunity. There are four RZs within the Metropolitan Area:

- *East Birmingham and North Solihull*
- *North Black Country and South Staffordshire*
- *South Black Country and West Birmingham*
- *Coventry and Nuneaton*

13.9 **Two Urban Regeneration Companies** have been established, one in West Bromwich, the other in Walsall, as agencies to co-ordinate regeneration in these areas, within the two 'Black Country' Regeneration Zones.

13.10 **Black Country Joint Core Strategy.** The four Black Country Local Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) have agreed to work together to produce a Black Country Core Strategy in partnership with the community and other key organisations such as voluntary and private sector bodies and businesses. This will be a 'spatial planning document' (dealing not only with land use but also environmental, economic and social issues) that will set out the vision, objectives and strategy for future development in the Black Country to 2026. The Core Strategy will be a Development Plan Document and will form the basis of the Black Country Local Authorities' Local Development Frameworks.

The Joint Core Strategy proposes two Regeneration Corridors in Walsall:

- **Bloxwich – Birchills – Bescot Regeneration Corridor**

This is a mixed area with great potential for regeneration, as recognised by the Walsall Regeneration Company. The corridor runs north-south, following the Chase Line Railway, the Walsall canal and the A34. It includes a wide range of housing areas, industry and logistics, parks and open spaces, as well as Bloxwich Town Centre and key services such as the Manor Hospital. Built heritage is also an important feature, especially related to the canal. Features include:

- Easy access to Walsall Strategic Centre, including Bus and Rail Stations.
- Chase Line Railway from Walsall Strategic Centre to Cannock Chase and Stafford, with stops at Bloxwich
- Bescot Stadium with access to Bescot Stadium Rail Station
- Industrial areas at Leamore, Green Lane and Pleck

- **Darlaston – Willenhall – Wednesfield Regeneration Corridor**

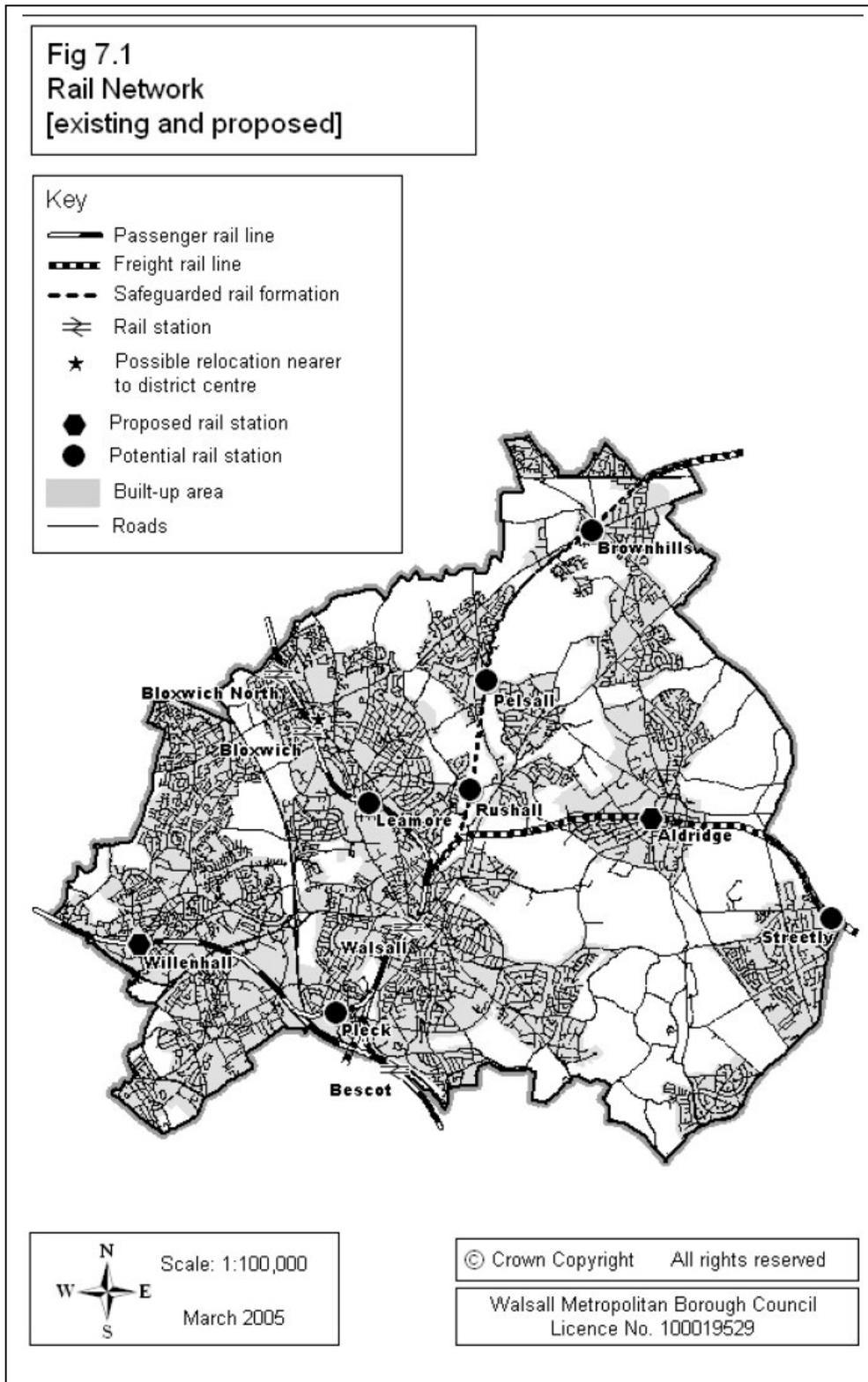
This is an area extending north-westwards from the M6 at Darlaston, through Willenhall to the south of Wednesfield Town Centre and falls mostly within the Black Country Central Employment Land Investment Corridor. There are two large industrial areas at each end: the Darlaston Strategic Development Area; and the Neachells Estate at Wednesfield, with a mix of housing and industrial land in the middle part. This includes Willenhall Town Centre, which has many historic and attractive commercial buildings and streets. There are parks and green spaces to the west of Willenhall centre and some attractive housing around Willenhall. Features include:

- Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) – Walsall Regeneration Company priority for high quality employment
- Neachells employment area
- Ashmore Lake industrial area north of Willenhall
- Willenhall Town Centre
- Existing transport links tend to cut across the industrial areas rather than providing good internal access, particularly at the Darlaston end
- Potential for a new station and improved services to Willenhall, to enhance its role for high quality housing. Also potential for sidings to connect industry.

WALSALL UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (UDP)

As adopted by the Council on 7 March 2005.

Plan effective end date 31 March 2011



Policy JP3: Rail-served Sites

Where land or buildings have potential to be served by rail, the Council will encourage their use for activities incorporating rail freight.

Policy JP8: Bad Neighbour Industrial Uses

(a) The location of potentially bad neighbour uses will be given very careful consideration taking into account the particular environmental implications of individual proposals, which must satisfy all of the following criteria: -

- IV Uses that are unsightly and cannot be screen satisfactorily will not be permitted in prominent or visually sensitive locations (such as next to a main road, railway or canal).

Walsall Town Centre - Policy WA16: Rail Services

The Council will seek to improve the accessibility of Walsall Town Centre by rail to the widest possible range of destinations. It will particularly encourage inter-city rail operators to serve the Town Centre, and develop the town's rail station as a local and longer distance rail hub. This may involve increasing capacity and improving facilities to deal with increased rail services. The provision of additional parking to serve the station will be considered as part of the overall strategy for parking in the Town Centre

Bloxwich - Policy BX9: Improved Passenger Rail Facilities

The Council will, in partnership with Centro and the rail operators, explore the potential to relocate Bloxwich rail station to a site closer to the District Centre, as indicated on the Inset Map. There should be secure parking for rail users and good integration with other public transport services.

Aldridge - Policy AL6: Rail Station

The Council supports the provision of a railway station for Aldridge, with associated park and ride facility, on land at Anchor Meadow as identified on the Inset Map.

Willenhall - UDP Policy WH5: Rail Station and Transport Interchange

The Council will strongly encourage Centro to construct a passenger railway station to serve the Willenhall District Centre, as a matter of priority. This should include provision for interchange with other public transport modes and park and ride. Land required for the station and associated facilities, as identified on the Inset Map, will be protected for that purpose.

Brownhills - Policy BR10: Transport and Interchange

In view of the potential for the re-opening of the Walsall to Lichfield railway for heavy rail and/or. Metro and the proposed major housing/leisure development of Silver Street, the Council will promote the provision of a "transport interchange" at the northern end of Silver Street. This is likely to include: -

- I. A Rail / Metro station – it is envisaged that this could be accommodated within the existing rail corridor.
- II. A “park and ride” facility – the Council will work with the developers of the Silver Street site to ensure that the use of parking areas provided for the leisure/commercial development can be managed for this purpose.
- III. A bus “pick up and drop off point” – it is envisaged that this can be accommodated within the highway
- IV. Cycle parking and cycle links to the centre and the National Cycle Route to the north of the rail corridor
- V. Pedestrian links to the centre which are convenient and secure.

Proposal T3: The Rail and Metro Network

(a) The Council will safeguard land for rail use and promote jointly with Centro and the rail operators the improvement of existing, and the establishment of new, passenger rail, rail freight and/or Metro services, as appropriate, on the following routes shown on the Proposals Map:-

Existing Passenger and Freight Rail Services

- IV Walsall - Birmingham (with connections to London, the South and the Southwest);
- IV Walsall - Wolverhampton (with connections to the west, Wales, the North West and Scotland);
- IV Walsall - Stafford (with connections to the North West and Scotland).

Existing Freight Line with Potential for Passenger Rail Services

- IV Walsall - Aldridge - Streetly - Sutton Coldfield – Birmingham.

Potential Passenger and Freight Rail Services

- IV Walsall - Wednesbury - Dudley Port - Stourbridge - Kidderminster (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby).

Potential Passenger and Freight Rail and/or Metro Services

- IV Walsall - Brownhills (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby).

(b) In addition to these routes, the Council supports the construction of a metro link from Wolverhampton through Willenhall, central Walsall and Darlaston to Wednesbury. An indicative alignment is now being promoted, and this will be subject to statutory procedures. This would be additional to the existing passenger rail services.

(c) New or enhanced station facilities will be encouraged wherever possible on existing and potential rail routes. New stations are already proposed for Aldridge and Willenhall and the opportunity to provide a replacement station for Bloxwich is to be explored. Other potential locations for new stations include Brownhills, Pelsall, Rushall, Streetly and Pleck. Opportunities for park and ride facilities, including strategic park and

ride, will also be encouraged where they will lead to a genuine reduction in the use of the private car and are consistent with other policies of this Plan.

(d) The Council will encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail. Road / rail interchanges will be encouraged subject to the effect on traffic and the environment of the surrounding area. The provision and retention of private sidings will be strongly encouraged for employment sites where this is operationally feasible, subject again to traffic and environmental considerations.

Policy T12: Access by Public Transport (Bus, Rail, Metro and Ring and Ride)

(a) General

1. The standards are expressed in terms of bus service provision, but rail and metro services can also count towards the standards, provided that:
 - The rail station or metro stop is not more than 800 metres walking distance from the entrance to the building; and
 - The rail or metro service provides stops within the identified catchment of the facility; and
 - The timing of services, in conjunction with other public transport services, achieves the overall frequency standard required.

(b) Industry (Class B1(b and c), B2 and B8)

1. Developments should be within 400 metres walking distance of a bus stop or 800 metres of a rail or metro stop, on a route which serves a centre or a transport interchange as defined by Centro.
2. The service frequency should be at least 30 minutes during working hours.

SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

WALSALL

The South Staffordshire Railway arrived in Walsall in 1847. With the opening of the line from Walsall to Lichfield in 1849, and to Dudley in 1850, Walsall rapidly became a major junction. The line to Wolverhampton, via Bentley, opened in 1872 and the Midland Railway arrived, via Sutton Park, in 1879.

Today, Walsall is still a major railway junction with six routes radiating from the town. Four of these are in regular use and two are currently out of use, but these two alignments could easily be re-instated to expand the network.

WALSALL STATION

Walsall Town Centre needs a better range of rail services to improve its accessibility by sustainable means of transport and to help boost its vitality, and Walsall Town Centre viability, by bringing more people into the centre. Inter-city and long distance services would be particularly important because they would help to raise the profile of centre and attract investment in a wider range of leisure and commercial uses. The Council will encourage the provision of rail capacity improvements to meet these objectives.

Walsall Station

Unitary Development Plan Policy WA16: Rail Services

The Council will seek to improve the accessibility of Walsall Town Centre by rail to the widest possible range of destinations. It will particularly encourage inter-city rail operators to serve the Town Centre, and develop the town's rail station as a local and longer distance rail hub. This may involve increasing capacity and improving facilities to deal with increased rail services. The provision of additional parking to serve the station will be considered as part of the overall strategy for parking in the Town Centre.

Walsall Station

In the Strategic Rail Authority's Route Utilisation Strategy, Walsall featured amongst the top 20 stations for growth in the West Midlands. In the period 1994-2004 rail passenger numbers jumped 180% at Walsall Station when rail frequency was increased. This shows that the improvement in numbers using Walsall was far above the general surge in passenger numbers across the rail network in this period. This is widely regarded as a success story that demonstrates that positive investment pays dividends in terms of adding patronage to trains and consequently relieving the road network. It will also provide a greater choice of destinations served by public transport for people who do not have access to a car.

History and Station Description: Walsall Station

Walsall railway station is the principal railway station of Walsall, in the heart of the town. The main entrance is situated inside the Saddlers Centre but access to the railway station is via a side entrance in the evening when the shopping mall is closed. It is currently operated by Central Trains, who run all of its train services. The new franchise operator is Govia (London Midland) who will take over on 11 November 2007.

The railway came early to Walsall, but didn't at first enter the town. In 1837, the first railway line in the area opened – the Grand Junction Railway between Birmingham and Warrington. The local station, 'Bescot Bridge', was near the Walsall to Wednesbury road. From here horse-drawn coaches ran into Walsall to the 18th century George Hotel on The Bridge. In 1847 the South Staffordshire Railway opened a temporary station in Bridgeman Place, linking with the Grand Junction line at Bescot Junction. In 1849, the Wichnor Junction line to Dudley opened and connected with the Bescot to Walsall section. A magnificent new station building was opened in Station Street. Around the year 1900, Walsall Station was working to capacity, with approximately 1,000 train movements in just 24 hours, and provided jobs for more than 200 guards, porters, shunters, clerks and officials.

However, with the growth of the post-war motor industry the station's importance declined, accelerated by the 'Beeching Axe' in 1965 which closed all passenger services north of Walsall leaving only the trains running to Birmingham. Walsall Station was virtually defunct by 1977, when this service became hourly. In late 1978 the town's fine, prestigious old station was demolished and replaced with Marks & Spencer's and the Saddlers Centre shopping mall, opened in 1980. The station (the sixth to serve the town) now became little more than a glorified concrete passenger halt, rebuilt with a tiny concourse and ticket office accessible via Station Street and the Saddlers Centre.

In the late 20th century, however, rail passenger services underwent a surprising national revival when road congestion began to escalate enormously, and in 1989, the Walsall to Hednesford service was reinstated under the auspices of Staffordshire County Council, West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (Centro), British Rail and local councils along the route. The resurrection of Walsall's railway services continued in the late 1990s and saw the extension of the Hednesford line through to Rugeley and then Stafford, as well as the reopening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton service in 1998.

In 1995, major improvements were made to Walsall station, funded by Centro with financial assistance from Walsall City Challenge and the European Regional Development Fund. The station concourse was remodelled, platforms 2 and 3 were refurbished, with a new waiting room added and enigmatic "poetry" on the walls of the stairs to the platforms.

The station now has three platforms:

- Platform 1: operating northbound services to Stafford;
- Platform 2: operating southbound, semi-fast services from Stafford to Birmingham New Street;
- Platform 3: (a terminus platform) operating local services to Birmingham New Street and to Wolverhampton.

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

The mainline platforms are not electrified, but platform 3 (and the through line next to it) is electrified to 25kV AC overhead power. This electrification ends for both tracks at the northern end of the platforms.

The present layout of 3 through tracks and 1 bay was thought to be sufficient at that time. A lot has happened since and a proper 4 track layout is now essential to avoid conflicts between passenger services and the frequent freight trains. There are capacity problems at Walsall with up to three trains an hour now terminating at the station, two of which have to use platform 3 (the bay). Running more trains through to Hednesford and Rugeley, as is now planned, will undoubtedly help, as would extending the electric service through to Aldridge. Network rail is planning to convert platform 3 into a through line and also provide overhead wiring on platform 2. It should be considered whether space for a possible platform 4 should be safeguarded.

Usage: Walsall Station	
Current	Predicted
Annual station usage 1,080,127 (2005/6 figure from Centro)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Assessment predicts 34% - 45% growth to 2020/27

Track and Infrastructure: Walsall Station			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictive operating layout in the Walsall Station area Capacity problems with three through tracks and 1 bay The mainline platforms are not electrified, but platform 3 (and the through line next to it) is electrified to 25kV AC overhead power. This electrification ends for both tracks at the northern end of the platforms. 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signalling renewals in Walsall area. Route planning to model options in conjunction with resignalling renewal Bi-directional signalling from platform 3 along the down fast to Pleck Junction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail Resignalling 2011 Network Rail Network Rail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewal Improved performance Operational flexibility 	To be included in Network Rail's Walsall resignalling scheme (2011/12) scope (depends on a BCR of at least 2)
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrification of platform 2 Conversion of platform 3 to a through platform Extend platform lengths to accommodate 6 / 8 car Electrifying the whole of Walsall Station, including the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail Discretionary Fund Network Rail /Centro Network Rail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved performance Capacity Operational flexibility 	Business case to be worked up

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

up and down slow from Pleck Junction	Discretionary Fund		
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible reinstatement of platform 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) 		Aspiration

Stations and Car Parks: Walsall Station

Current Position

- 4 trains per hour from Birmingham (2 are semi-fasts),
- 2 trains use platform 3 (the bay).
- 3 trains per hour now terminating at the station
- 1 semi-fast train extends onto the Cannock line (Diesel Multiple Unit).
- 1 train an hour to Wolverhampton

Further Goals	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access from Saddlers Centre and Station Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro 	Improved passenger experience	Plans in place for improved entrance in Station Street

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Walsall Station

Current Position

See sections: “Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley” and “Walsall – Wolverhampton”

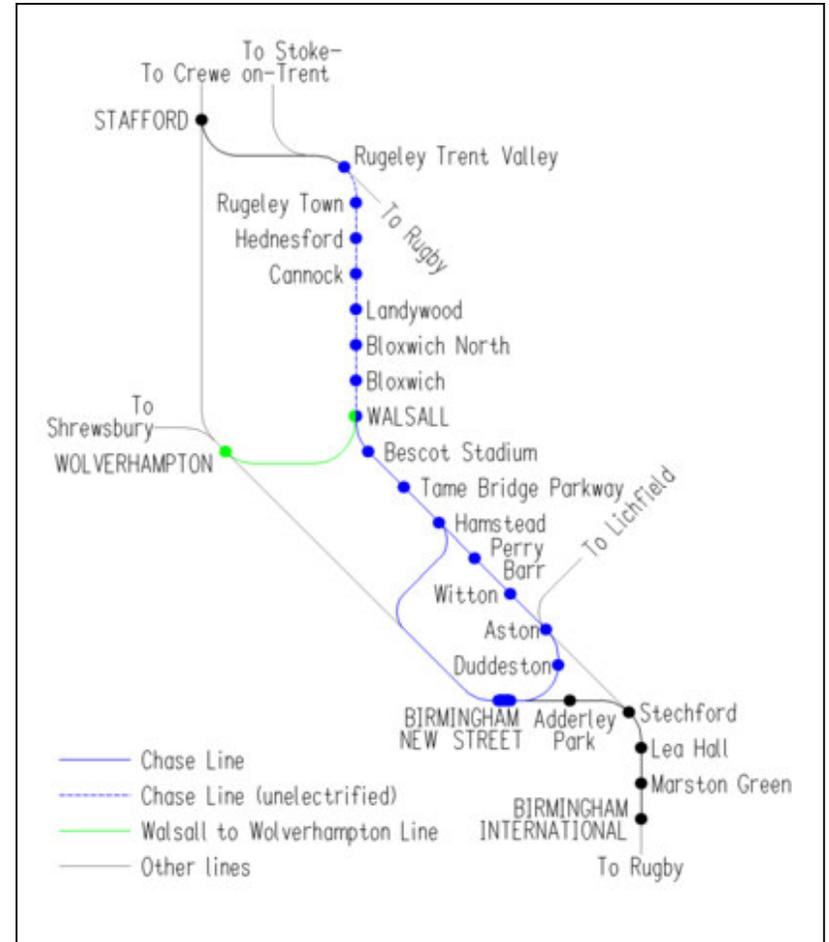
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connections to London and other major towns and cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train operators 	Greater accessibility	Will discuss with Govia following start of franchise in November

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Corridor: BIRMINGHAM – WALSALL – RUGELEY – STAFFORD

Section: BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET – WALSALL – RUGELEY
(Grand Junction line to Bescot and Aston)
(Chase Line to Rugeley)

The line from Birmingham to Walsall (sometimes referred to as the Walsall Line) has two alternative routes, both of which are electrified. Of the two routes, one leaves New Street from the east, following the Birmingham Cross-City Line as far as Aston, where it diverges to the west. The other route leaves New Street from the west, and travels via Soho. Beyond Walsall, the line is not electrified, and continues north to Hednesford and Rugeley.



(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Unitary Development Plan Policy

Bloxwich BX9: Improved Passenger Rail Facilities

The Council will, in partnership with Centro and the rail operators, explore the potential to relocate Bloxwich rail station to a site closer to the District Centre, as indicated on the Inset Map. There should be secure parking for rail users and good integration with other public transport services.

A new Bloxwich station in a more accessible location would encourage greater rail patronage, and contribute towards the overall strategy for public transport. The Council, Centro and the rail operators will together investigate the feasibility of relocating the station.

History and Route Description: Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley

This 24 mile section of the network passes through predominately urban areas until, after crossing Green Belt north of Bloxwich, it passes through Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to Hednesford to join the West Coast Main Line north of Rugeley. The services on the route are currently provided by Central Trains and are supported by the Passenger Transport Executive (Centro) as far as Hednesford, although the Centro boundary is at Bloxwich North. Services between Hednesford and Rugeley Town are supported by Staffordshire County Council and Cannock Chase District Council.

The section from Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley was previously freight-only, and reopened to passenger trains in stages between 1989 and 1998. There is rising passenger demand on the Walsall – Rugeley section of route in response to increasing housing development across the Cannock Chase area, whilst most opportunities for employment still remain orientated towards Birmingham and Walsall.

Two types of services are operated:

- Stopping trains from Birmingham New Street to Walsall are operated by Class 323 electrical multiple units. Some stopping trains continue to Hednesford, but use Class 150 diesel multiple units as this section of line is not electrified. Some electric trains from Walsall continue from Birmingham New Street to terminate at Birmingham International, and vice versa.

Services from New Street to Rugeley only stop at Tame Bridge Parkway, south of Walsall. Only daytime train services currently continue beyond Rugeley to Stafford, working over the Trent Valley section of the West Coast Main Line. These services are also operated by Class 150 diesel units.

The Grand Junction line to Bescot and Aston: Opened in 1837, this line now carries both freight and two trains per hour between Walsall and Birmingham.

Aspirations for a through service to Birmingham International, Coventry and ideally London will be held back by the platform lengths at Walsall station which are currently too short for the 9-car Pendolino trains. A short-term option might be for some of the 4-car Coventry/Northampton

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) to be extended to Walsall, but this would depend on finding a path, at appropriate times, through the Soho Junctions and at Walsall station. An “Open Access” operator might be interested.

Bescot Stadium Station opened as Bescot Bridge station on the Grand Junction Railway in 1847, and billed as the first station to serve Walsall . . . some two miles away! However, later in 1847 Walsall station was built at Bridgeman Place in the centre of Walsall. Extensive goods facilities were developed at Bescot from 1881 onwards that are still in use today, although somewhat scaled-down.

Our aspirations are:

- 4 trains per hour (currently 2) stopping at Bescot Stadium, with a major Park & Ride facility to serve Walsall and Birmingham
- To have the station fully accessible to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- To lengthen the platforms in 2012 to accommodate Intercity trains, particularly from London. Preserving and improving our transport network is critical if we are to attract the kind of investment that can help us diversify our economic base without damaging the environment or overloading our infrastructure
- The proposed Wrexham to Marylebone service will stop at Tame Bridge Station. Lengthened platforms at Bescot would enable the service to stop here and serve the Football Club with its conference facilities and adjoining hotel, and also the proposed major industrial development on the Wednesbury side of the station.

The Chase Line to Rugeley: South Staffordshire Railway Company opened the line from Walsall (Ryecroft Junction) to the Cannock and Norton Branch, with Stations at Bloxwich, Wyrley, Church Bridge and Cannock. In 1859, it was extended to Rugeley, and in 1861 the London and North Western Railway took over the Cannock line and widened Walsall Station to accommodate passing lines through the centre for mineral and freight trains, leaving two loops for passenger trains. Under the “Beeching Axe” the line from Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley was closed to passenger traffic on 18 January 1965.

In the late 20th century, rail passenger services underwent a surprising national revival when road congestion began to escalate enormously, and on 7 April 1989, after a long campaign, passenger services were restored on the 10 mile Walsall to Hednesford section under the auspices of Staffordshire county Council, West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, British Rail and local councils along the route, including Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. A further 4 mile section to Rugeley Town was opened experimentally in 1997. Subsequently, a further 1 mile section was opened to Rugeley Trent Valley. So successful has this re-opening been that the basic hourly service is now frequently overcrowded and extra trains are provided in the peak hours.

There are a number of freight movements through Bloxwich. The route is heavily used by coal traffic servicing Rugeley Power Station. There is one train per day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday timetabled to work from Bescot yard to the smelter works in Bloxwich and a return working. In practice, though, this service runs as and when it is required. In future there could also be up to two additional trains bringing limestone and gypsum to/from Rugeley Power Station.

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

The route from Walsall to Rugeley suffers from particularly poor line speeds (maximum 45mph). A higher line speed would generate resource (train crew/rolling stock) benefits as well as performance improvement and revenue benefits. This route could also be used as a diversionary route for the Bushbury - Stafford route for non-gauge sensitive traffic if it had a higher line speed. Ongoing track renewals over the last few years have replaced much of the former jointed track with continuous welded rail (CWR), and forthcoming track renewals will facilitate works to make a higher line speed easier to achieve.

The Chase Line is one of the prime candidates in the region for electrification. Electric passenger trains have greater acceleration and a higher top speed than the Diesel units currently used on the line. They would be able to run at higher speeds between stations on this hilly route, leading to reduced journey times. Previous plans to electrify the line in 1962 were dropped from the West Coast scheme when the old service was withdrawn. It is estimated that the costs of electrifying this 16 mile line would now be between £12-15 m (based on average costs of £0.5 m per single track kilometre in recent electrification projects), but the benefits would be considerable. One issue at Walsall is the low tunnel roof at the north end of the station but this is not insurmountable.

The simple wooden platforms provided at Bloxwich, Bloxwich North, Landywood and Cannock when the line was re-opened in 1989 are now life-expired and need replacement. A Cannock Rail Showcase package has been proposed by Walsall Council, Staffordshire Country Council and WMPTE/Centro. This would upgrade to all six stations on the route between Bloxwich and Rugeley Town and increase all platform lengths to 6 car. Where appropriate, improvements will be made to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and additional security measures will be put in place.

Bloxwich Station The original Bloxwich Station was opened on 1 February 1858, but was demolished in January 1965, under the “Beeching Axe”. In 1989, a new Bloxwich Station was built on this former freight line on a new site north of the one that was closed. The new station - an unmanned wooden-platform halt with two bus shelters - was supposed to be open by the time the line to Hednesford was reopened. However, allegedly due to planning blunders by British Rail (according to Walsall Express & Star 23/3/89 p7 and 24/8/89 p35), Bloxwich Station was not actually ready in time for the opening of the line. British Rail did not get planning permission until after work on the station at Croxdene Avenue had already begun: the newspapers said that according to the Council the application was late being submitted. Also in August it was reported that British Rail had apparently, belatedly, found out that the platform they were building was not long enough and began work to extend it, again without planning permission. Retrospective approval was given, however, and work went ahead.

The Express& Star 22/11/1988 p9 read “Big plans for town rail link” and stated “Restoration of the old station site in Station Road has been ruled out, instead a new station is planned in Croxdene Avenue which would be close to the Dudley Fields and Sandbank housing estates. The new station would also be closer to the High Street shopping area than the old station and could easily be served by bus links”. Sadly, in the following years, the new Bloxwich Station has garnered a reputation for being dark, dingy, threatening at night and out of sight; a haven for criminals, vandals and drug addicts. The new station is located in a deep cutting below Croxdene Avenue and has simple wooden platforms which are now life-expired and need replacement. Croxdene Avenue is one way (approached from Hall Road) and is more difficult to find and

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

harder to get to than the old station, with no parking, no main bus route nearby and far less welcoming than the attractive Victorian manned station.

A survey of local residents in 2004 found strong support for a proposal to relocate the station half a mile south to its original site in Bloxwich Town Centre, where there is also space for a car park. Re-location would give good access for residents in the New Invention area as well as from Bloxwich itself. Unfortunately, there is also a third track leading to a freight branch at the proposed station site, and consultants engaged by Centro advised that, for safety and Disability Discrimination Act requirements, a ramped footbridge spanning all three tracks would be necessary, taking the cost of the new station to more than £2m (2003 figure). Network Rail feels that, due to signalling constraints/standards, this site is not ideal.

Bloxwich North Station On the re-opened Walsall – Hednesford line, the twin wood frame platforms are located next to Broad Lane bridge and opened experimentally at a cost of £280,000 in 1990.

Usage: Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley

Current	Predicted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 485 people arrivals in Birmingham 0800-0900 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Assessment predicts 34% - 45% growth to 2020/27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 553 people departures from Birmingham 1700-1800 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual station usage (2004) – figures from Centro 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall 1,080,127 (2005/6 figure) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aston 357,400 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tame Bridge 296,600 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perry Barr 249,200 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannock 198,600 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hednesford 195,650 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamstead 124,700 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duddeston 124,050 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rugeley Town 123,800 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bescot Stadium 88,800 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landywood 76,600 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witton 60,750 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloxwich North 43,450 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloxwich 32,150 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rugeley Trent Valley 9,276 	

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Track and Infrastructure: Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive operating layout in the Walsall Station area • Double Track - 24 mile section of the network, via Aston, Perry Barr, Tame Bridge, Walsall, Bloxwich and Hednesford • Single Track on the approach to Rugeley North Junction • Electrified at 25 kV AC overhead between Birmingham New Street and Walsall (terminal platform only) • Not electrified on 16 mile section north of Walsall • Freight loops Bescot and also Bloxwich and Perry Barr in the Walsall direction only • Freight traffic operates throughout with route passing through Bescot Yard • Junctions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ryecroft (Sutton Park Line) ○ Pleck (for Bescot and Darlaston) ○ Perry Barr (Soho Line) • Signals - controlled by New Street Power Signal Box (PSB), Walsall Power Signal Box (PSB) and mechanical signal boxes at Bloxwich, Hednesford and Brereton. • Absolute block signalling on very long sections restrict service frequency on Cannock line. • Line speed - maximum permissible is 75 mph • 45 mph north of Walsall with long signalling sections • Ryecroft Junction only 20 mph 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall Power Signal Box area proposed for re-signalling (uncertainty if Cannock line to be included). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail 	Renewal	Committed 2011
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall station area re-modelling in 2012, including electrification of platform 2 and conversion of platform 3 to through running • Soho loop line speed improvements (new scheme) • Ryecroft Chord to link Chase Line to Sutton Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail Discretionary Fund • Network Rail • Network Rail Discretionary Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved performance Improved performance Improve operational flexibility, freight and passenger capacity, capability and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business case to be made Business case to be made Investigating feasibility

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011;	Further Goals: 5 – 10 years;	Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleck Junction turn-back facility (increase capacity on Grand Junction route and ease congestion at Bescot Yard) Provision of new intermediate signal between Bloxwich and Hednesford Ryecroft Junction line speed improvement Linespeed improvements Walsall to Rugeley above 45 mph (2011/14) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail Discretionary Fund Network Rail Renewals Network Rail Discretionary Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased capacity and ease congestion at Bescot Improved linespeed / capacity / capability / performance 	To be included in Network Rail's Walsall resignalling scheme scope
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrification of Cannock Line from Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley (including Down slow between Pleck Junction and Ryecroft Junction) Freight gauge improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail Discretionary Fund Network Rail Discretionary Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve operational flexibility, freight and passenger capacity, capability and performance Freight capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspiration Aspiration

Stations and Car Parks: Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortest platforms are at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perry Barr (112m) Hamstead (112m) Tame Bridge (101m) Bescot Stadium (89m) All Cannock line station platforms (80m or less) require lengthening Tame Bridge car park full by 09.30 hrs 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bescot Stadium, Hamstead and Perry Barr induction loops and new 'live' easy to read departure information displays on platforms and at station entrances which will tell passengers exactly when the next train will arrive. Take forward Cannock Rail Showcase package to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro Centro – to fund station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer convenience Capacity/passenger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured DfT "Access for All " small scheme funding Centro developing joint

<p>(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; deliver upgrade to all six stations on the route between Bloxwich and Rugeley Town and increase all platform lengths to 6 car</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffed ticket offices at Cannock and Hednesford • P&R extensions at Cannock and Hednesford • linespeed increases and additional IBS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved facilities for interchange at Rugeley Trent Valley 	<p>Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail - NRDF • Centro • Centro • Signal renewals 2011 <p>Train operating companies</p>	<p>Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)</p> <p>convenience</p> <p>Passenger convenience</p> <p>Performance and capacity</p> <p>Customer convenience</p>	<p>industry business case. Phased approach. Sponsors appointed for linespeed and station upgrade phases. IBS will be looked at when decision on whether to resignal the line taken. Committed - completion 2009</p>
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform extensions at Perry Barr, Hamstead, Tame Bridge, Bescot Stadium and Rugeley Trent Valley (all 6 car) • Review staffing at Bloxwich, Bloxwich North and Landywood • Hamstead station redevelopment • Additional P&R provision at Tame Bridge, Bescot Stadium, Rugeley Town and Rugeley Trent Valley • Bescot Stadium – major Park & Ride serving Walsall and Birmingham • Bescot fully accessible and DDA compliant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centro • Network Rail 	<p>Capacity/passenger convenience</p>	<p>Business case to be made</p>
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More platform extensions across all stations to Rugeley • Station interchange with the Jewellery Line and Midland Metro Line One at Benson Road • New station at Soho Road Interchange • New station at Leamore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centro • Birmingham CC/Centro • Birmingham CC/Centro • Walsall MBC/Centro 	<p>Capacity/passenger convenience</p> <p>Customer convenience</p> <p>Customer convenience</p> <p>Customer convenience</p>	<p>Business case to be made</p> <p>Aspiration</p> <p>Aspiration</p> <p>Aspiration</p>

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Birmingham New Street – Walsall – Rugeley			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 trains per hour with 2 semi-fasts to Walsall, 1 which extends onto the Cannock line (Diesel Multiple Unit) • Most semi fast services operate via Soho Loop • 2 trains per hour local (Electric Multiple Unit) services run through to Birmingham International (via Birmingham New Street) • Central Trains Class 323 electric provide service to Walsall • Central Trains Class 150 diesel trains on Cannock Line • Morning and evening peaks see additional service provision for Cannock line <p>Note: As a result of losing Class 150 rolling stock to Arriva Trains Wales, Central Trains has secured Class 158 and some electric stock. The revised timetable to utilise this includes more capacity to reduce overcrowding, but 2 trains from Hednesford to Birmingham will be severed at Walsall with cross platform interchange (and 5 minute connection time). Concerns raised over loss of significant peak-hour through journeys and, in partial compensation, one train will now operate through to Wolverhampton. Centro acknowledged that the change is regrettable but was the 'least worse' option. The situation results from the 12 year franchise for Wales compared to 7 years for West Midlands and ROSCO's (rolling stock leasing company) commercial interests.</p>			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Cannock Line evening service provision • Cannock Line half-hourly off-peak service to Hednesford / Rugeley Trent Valley • 4 trains per hour stopping at Bescot (major P&R) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operator/Centro 	Capacity/passenger convenience	Discussions taking place between Centro and Govia
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six trains per hour from New Street if the capacity is freed up by the construction of the Bordesley Chords. Could potentially facilitate half-hourly services to Birmingham from Rugeley, Wolverhampton and Aldridge via Walsall. • Train lengthening (6 / 8 car) • Faster journey times to Birmingham • InterCity connections to major towns and cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operator/Centro 	Capacity/passenger convenience Capacity Improved journey times Increased connectivity	Aspiration Aspiration Aspiration Aspiration
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional rolling stock and/or fleet replacement • Increased frequencies north of Walsall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train operator/Centro 	Capacity/capability	Aspiration

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Corridor: WOLVERHAMPTON - WALSALL - SUTTON COLDFIELD

Section: WALSALL TO WOLVERHAMPTON
The Grand Junction line from Bushbury and Wolverhampton

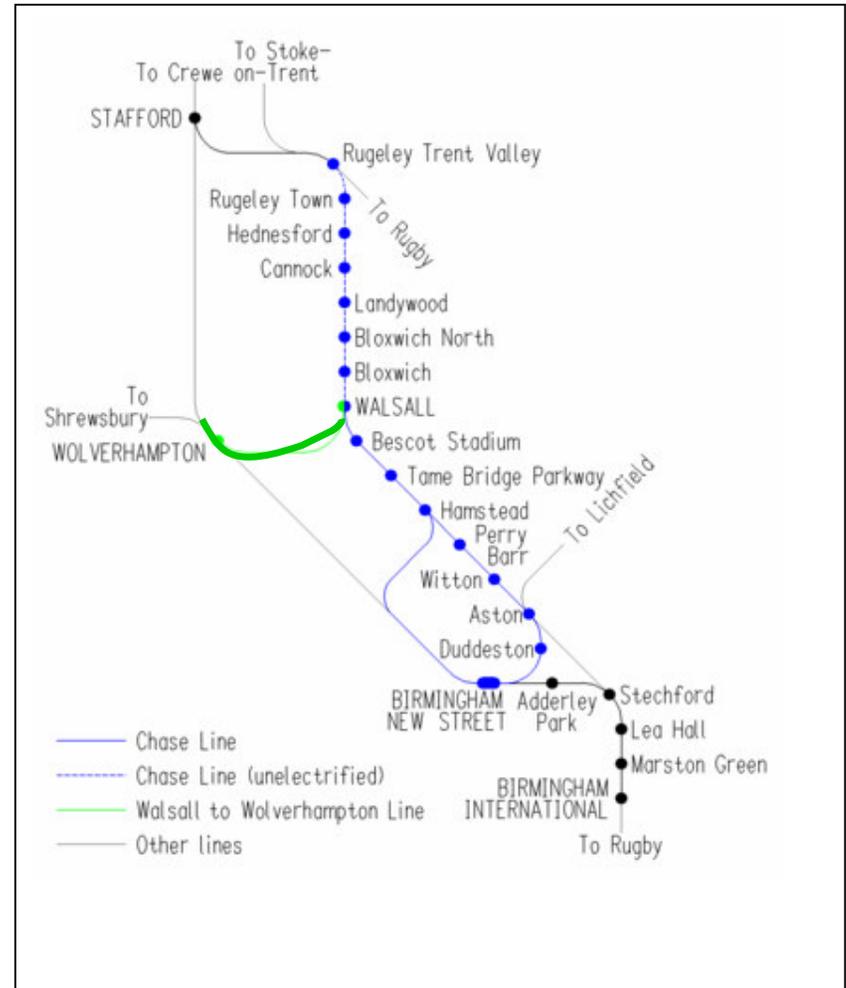
The Walsall to Wolverhampton Line is a railway line connecting the town of Walsall to the city of Wolverhampton. For most of its length, it follows the part of the route of the original Grand Junction Railway.

Passenger services, which are funded by Centro and operated by Central Trains, operate hourly. These were reintroduced to the line in the late 1990s, having previously ceased as part of the Beeching Axe of the 1960s.

Currently, there is one weekday early morning train between Walsall and Telford /Wellington in each direction.

There are only two stations on the route: Walsall and Wolverhampton

Govia, the successful bidder for the West Midlands Rail Franchise, has been asked to provide a priced option from for retention of the existing Walsall – Wolverhampton service from December 2007, based on the current service pattern and frequency. However, there is no guarantee that the service will remain and may require Centro/WMPTA funding.



(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Unitary Development Plan Policy

UDP Policy WH5: Willenhall Rail Station and Transport Interchange

The Council will strongly encourage Centro to construct a passenger railway station to serve the Willenhall District Centre, as a matter of priority. This should include provision for interchange with other public transport modes and park and ride. Land required for the station and associated facilities, as identified on the Inset Map, will be protected for that purpose.

A railway station would increase the profile and accessibility of the Willenhall District Centre and would open up wider employment opportunities for local people. A site for a station has been identified off Rosehill / Bilston Street. The site can also accommodate a small car park. However, the Council believes that the provision of a significant Park and Ride facility is necessary if the station is to be used to its full potential. The Council will therefore encourage the inclusion of adjacent land to provide a Park & Ride facility. The frequency of services and the number of destinations served are also important factors in ensuring that the station is well used and has the maximum regenerative benefit. The Council will, therefore, encourage both Centro and the rail operator to provide as frequent a service as possible to as many destinations as possible.

History and Route Description: Walsall to Wolverhampton

The Grand Junction Line from Bushbury and Wolverhampton: Opened in 1837, this line now mainly carries freight, diverted passenger trains and the hourly shuttle service to Wolverhampton. Pleck station was closed in 1958, Darlaston and Willenhall stations in 1965. The route passes through an industrial, urban landscape providing an important link between two of the five “W” Black Country centres.

The present hourly shuttle from Walsall to Wolverhampton is the most lightly loaded service in the West Midlands and often has as few as 6 passengers per train. The service has a poor reputation for reliability but is, nevertheless, by far the quickest way to reach Wolverhampton from Walsall – a distance of 6 miles and taking less than 15 minutes by rail. Unfortunately, connections from the Cannock line are very poor, currently involving a long wait at Walsall. This problem would disappear if either service gained a half-hourly frequency. One possibility would be to extend the existing Birmingham – Aston – Walsall electric service to Wolverhampton; but capacity at Crane Street Junction would remain a problem.

The Council will strongly encourage Centro to construct a passenger railway station to serve the Willenhall District Centre, as a matter of priority. This should include provision for interchange with other public transport modes and park and ride. Land required by Centro for the station and associated facilities is protected Unitary Development Plan, Policy WH5. There may also be potential for a station serving the Darlaston Strategic Development Area, which is the focus of an emerging Regeneration Framework. There is also potential for a station at Pleck which has a substantial surrounding residential catchment.

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Usage: Walsall to Wolverhampton					
Current	Predicted				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 people arrivals into Wolverhampton and 24 into Walsall 0800-0900 18 people departures from Wolverhampton and 12 from Walsall 1700-1800 Annual station usage (2004) <table border="0" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Wolverhampton</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4,288,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Walsall</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,080,127</td> </tr> </table> 	Wolverhampton	4,288,600	Walsall	1,080,127	
Wolverhampton	4,288,600				
Walsall	1,080,127				

Track and Infrastructure: Walsall to Wolverhampton			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictive operating layout at Walsall Capacity constraints at Wolverhampton Electrified Maximum permissible line speed 75mph The six mile section of line is double track throughout 5 minute headways Controlled from Walsall Power Signal Box (PSB) and Wolverhampton Power Signal Box (PSB) 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall and Wolverhampton PSB areas proposed for re-signalling in 2011/2012 Walsall station area re-modelling, including electrification of platform 2 and conversion of platform 3 to through-running (2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail 	Improved levels of performance and increased operating capacity/capability	To be included in Network Rail's Walsall resignalling scheme scope
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New bay platform at Wolverhampton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolverhampton CC/Centro/Network Rail 	Operational flexibility/capacity	Aspiration

Stations and Car Parks: Walsall to Wolverhampton			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no intermediate station between Walsall and Wolverhampton 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities /	Type of benefits	Status as at October

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

	Actions Needed		2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 car platform extension at Wolverhampton platform 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolverhampton CC/Centro/Network Rail 	Operational flexibility/capacity	2012
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station at Willenhall (land acquired) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Council/Centro 	Greater accessibility/convenience	Discussions taking place with partners and stakeholders
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New station at Darlaston/Pleck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Council/Centro 	Greater accessibility/convenience	Aspiration

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Walsall to Wolverhampton

Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One train per hour Central Trains Class 150 / 153 or 170 diesel Some services extended to Telford and Wellington 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities/ Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service development plan for half hourly service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/Govia 	Increased services	In talks with Centro and Govia
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service enhancements / increased frequencies six trains per hour from New Street, if the capacity is freed up by the construction of the Bordesley Chords, could potentially facilitate half-hourly services to Birmingham from Wolverhampton via Walsall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/Govia Network Rail 	Greater accessibility/convenience	Aspiration
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service enhancements / increased frequencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/Govia 	Capacity/passenger convenience	Aspiration

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Corridor: WOLVERHAMPTON - WALSALL - SUTTON COLDFIELD

Section: SUTTON PARK LINE

The Sutton Park Line is a freight-only railway line running from Walsall, through Aldridge, Streetly, Sutton Park and on to Castle Bromwich and Water Orton in the West Midlands. It is an important and strategic route, as it enables most freight trains to avoid congestion at Birmingham New Street station.

The Sutton Park line does not go through Sutton Coldfield Station, which is on the Cross City line. There has never been a direct connection between these two routes.

Unitary Development Plan Policy

Proposal T3 - The Rail and Metro Network

(a) The Council will safeguard land for rail use and promote jointly with Centro and the rail operators the improvement of existing, and the establishment of new, passenger rail, rail freight and/or Metro services, as appropriate, on the following routes shown on the Proposals Map:-

Existing Freight Line with Potential for Passenger Rail Services

IV. Walsall - Aldridge - Streetly - Sutton Coldfield – Birmingham.

The introduction of passenger rail services by the creation of a new station at Aldridge would be of enormous benefit to the District Centre. The West Midlands Local Transport Plan includes a proposal for the introduction of passenger rail services from Aldridge to Walsall and Wolverhampton, subject to the availability of resources. The Council also wishes to see services extended to other destinations, including Sutton Coldfield and Birmingham, for the station to reach its full potential. Outline planning permission has been granted for the station at Aldridge. As well as having a park and ride facility, it is also important that the station has good pedestrian links to the core of the District Centre and bus services.

Policy AL6: Aldridge Rail Station

The Council supports the provision of a railway station for Aldridge, with associated park and ride facility, on land at Anchor Meadow as identified on the Inset Map.

History and Route Description: Sutton Park Line

A former Midland line to Aldridge and Sutton Coldfield was opened in 1879 and the last passenger service ran in 1965. The line was highly contentious as it bisected Sutton Park itself and, in what was a considerably high-class area, met with significant resistance from local

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

landowners and also local residents. The Midland Railway, however, promised cheap local coal for the area which somewhat quelled local objections and moved ahead with buying a 2 mile strip through Sutton Park for £6,500.

The line remains one of the busiest freight lines in the region with up to 30 movements each way per day. Timetabled freight paths in January 2005 were 102 per day (though not all these slots are used). There is restricted signalling headway and the problem is exacerbated by the single track curves connecting the Sutton Park Line to Water Orton and Castle Bromwich.

In the late 1990s/early 2000s, plans were drawn up for a modern station in Aldridge to be built on the site of the old one, which closed in 1966. The site of the old station lies behind the doctor's surgery, at the bottom of Portland Road - part of the platform can still be seen. Should the station be re-opened, it would offer services to Birmingham via Sutton Coldfield, or the short journey in to Walsall. A re-opened station at Aldridge would attract a large number of commuters – particularly if a service to Birmingham could be provided. However, as passengers are generally reluctant to change trains, this implies early electrification from Walsall (approximately 4 miles) would be needed so that the existing electric service from Birmingham can be extended to a bay platform at Aldridge. A cross-over needs to be moved to enable a new station at Aldridge and a turnback, siding/bay platform would also be required.

We would urge Network Rail and Centro to consider the Sutton Park Line re-opening to passenger services by the introduction of tram/train trackshare with rail freight and passenger services on Derby line into Birmingham City Centre from Aldridge, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, Walmley and Castle Vale/Minworth.

Usage: Sutton Park Line	
Current	Predicted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight only 	

Track and Infrastructure: Sutton Park Line			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight route only Not electrified 13 mile double track freight route between Castle Bromwich (Park Lane) and Walsall (Ryecroft). 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-over needs to be moved to enable a new station at Aldridge Ryecroft Junction line speed improvement Improved signalling with decreased headways W10 gauge clearance for freight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail / NRDF Signalling renewals Signalling renewals Network Rail Discretionary 	Enable new station at Aldridge Improved performance and capacity	Included in Network Rail's Walsall resignalling scheme scope for 2011

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011;	Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Fund/Freight operating companies	Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)	2009
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryecroft Chord to link Sutton Line to Chase Line Electrification of route between Walsall – Nuneaton (-Coventry) and Walsall- Rugeley Trent Valley, including Ryecroft chord, by 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail Network Rail 	<p>Increased capacity</p> <p>Improve operational flexibility and freight and passenger capacity, capability and, performance</p>	<p>Discussing feasibility with Network Rail</p> <p>Aspiration</p>

Stations and Car Parks: Sutton Park Line			
Current Position			
Currently no operating stations along the line for passenger use			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility study to be conducted into re-opening line to passengers serving reinstated station at Aldridge, and possibly Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, Walmley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Council/ Birmingham CC/ Centro/Network Rail 		Study brief being written to examine business case for reintroduction
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bay platform at Aldridge (Cross-over needs to be moved to enable a new station at Aldridge) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail resignalling NRDF Centro Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) 	accessibility/convenience	To be included in Network Rail's Walsall (2012) resignalling scheme scope
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetly station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro 	accessibility/convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspiration

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Sutton Park Line
Current Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight route only

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility study to be conducted into re-opening line to passengers serving reinstated station at Aldridge, and possibly Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, Walmley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Council/ Birmingham CC/ Centro/Network Rail 		Study brief being developed
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of passenger services (linking Aldridge through to Wolverhampton or Birmingham) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail/ Govia/Centro 	Greater accessibility/convenience	Aspiration
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> six trains per hour from New Street, if the capacity and linespeed is increased up by the construction of the Bordesley Chords (2014-19). Could potentially facilitate half-hourly services to Birmingham from Aldridge via Walsall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Govia/ Centro/Network Rail 	Greater accessibility/convenience	Aspiration

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Corridor: STOURBRIDGE - WALSALL - LICHFIELD

**Section: STOURBRIDGE – WALSALL
(The South Staffordshire Line to Wednesbury and Stourbridge)**

Unitary Development Plan Policy
UDP Proposal T3 – The Rail and Metro Network: (b) The Council will safeguard land for rail use and promote jointly with Centro and the rail operators the improvement of existing, and the establishment of new, passenger rail, rail freight and/or Metro services, as appropriate, on the following routes shown on the Proposals Map:- Potential Passenger and Freight Rail Services V. Walsall - Wednesbury - Dudley Port - Stourbridge – Kidderminster (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby).

History and Route Description: Stourbridge – Walsall
<p>The line was opened from Dudley to Walsall in 1850 but was closed to passengers in 1964 and has been unused since 1980. The rusty tracks remain but will be lifted south of Wednesbury to facilitate Phase 2 of the Midland Metro which shares this alignment.</p> <p>The re-introduction of the Stourbridge – Walsall route would provide a freight bypass of Birmingham freeing up capacity in the New Street area and avoiding Lickey Incline. The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) conceded that the South Staffordshire line from Walsall to Dudley and Stourbridge should be safeguarded for future freight use. The “West Midlands Capacity Study” (Halcrow, 2000) noted that 10 freight trains per day could be diverted this way, avoiding the present seriously conflicting movements across the main line at Smethwick and saving 13 miles. Re-opening this route at the same time as the Metro construction would be more efficient and save closing the Metro for rail construction later.</p> <p>This route could one day also support a through passenger service from Worcester to Derby, but in the short term the business case for freight is stronger.</p> <p>Tram/train is a simple concept in which light rail vehicles capable of running both on street tramway and railway lines are operated with shared use of heavy rail corridors, effectively running “in between” heavy rail passenger or freight services. We would urge Network Rail and Centro to consider the feasibility of a Stourbridge to Walsall (and perhaps to Lichfield) tram/train trackshare with rail freight.</p>

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Usage: Stourbridge – Walsall	
Current	Predicted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unused 	

Track and Infrastructure: Stourbridge – Walsall			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight route to Pensnett and Round Oak (from Stourbridge) Disused track north of Round Oak An 11 mile section mostly double track line. Sidings at Brierley Hill and Round Oak with a stop block north of this location 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metro extension /tram-train to Merry Hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/local authorities 	accessibility/convenience	Feasibility study to be conducted
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-opening of the line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government freight funding/ Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) 	Freight and passenger capacity, capability, flexibility and performance	Aspiration

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Stourbridge – Walsall			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unused 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round Oak-Walsall: feasibility study into freight and tram-train use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail/Centro/local authorities/Freight operating companies 		2012
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of line for freight and passenger services, co-ordinated with the Metro Extension to Brierley Hill and removing freight from the Cross City South / Camp Hill lines for passenger improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government freight funding/ Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) / Regional Funding Allocation 	Freight and passenger capacity, capability, flexibility and performance	Aspiration

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Corridor: STOURBRIDGE - WALSALL - LICHFIELD

Section: WALSALL – BROWNHILLS – LICHFIELD
The South Staffordshire Line to Brownhills and Lichfield

Unitary Development Plan Policy
Policy T3 of the Unitary Development Plan safeguards the Walsall to Lichfield rail formation, with a view to the re-introduction of rail and/or Metro services. This, together with the Silver Street development, provides an opportunity for the development of a railway station. It is important, however, that the railway station is not developed in isolation, but well integrated with other modes of transport. The provision of a transport interchange will, therefore, encourage the use of modes other than the car, whilst linking and integrating the station to the centre. The proposal is, therefore, in keeping with the transport policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Local Transport Plan for the West Midlands, and Central Government.
UDP Proposal T3 – The Rail and Metro Network: (a) The Council will safeguard land for rail use and promote jointly with Centro and the rail operators the improvement of existing, and the establishment of new, passenger rail, rail freight and/or Metro services, as appropriate, on the following routes shown on the Proposals Map:-
Potential Passenger and Freight Rail Services and/or Metro Services VI Walsall – Brownhills (possibly as part of a new cross-region service from Worcester to Derby)
UDP Policy BR10: Transport and Interchange – Brownhills. In view of the potential for the re-opening of the Walsall to Lichfield railway for heavy rail and/or. Metro and the proposed major housing/leisure development of Silver Street, the Council will promote the provision of a “transport interchange” at the northern end of Silver Street. This is likely to include: - VI. A Rail / Metro station – it is envisaged that this could be accommodated within the existing rail corridor. VII. A “park and ride” facility – the Council will work with the developers of the Silver Street site to ensure that the use of parking areas provided for the leisure/ commercial development can be managed for this purpose. VIII. A bus “pick up and drop off point” – it is envisaged that this can be accommodated within the highway IX. Cycle parking and cycle links to the centre and the National Cycle Route to the north of the rail corridor V. Pedestrian links to the centre which are convenient and secure.

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

History and Route Description: Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield

First opened in 1849, this line was closed to passengers in January 1965 and the track was lifted between Ryecroft and Brownhills in 1984. The trackbed was subsequently leased to Sustrans (the sustainable transport charity) for use as part of Route 5 of the National Cycle Route. However, the track remains in situ south from Lichfield as far as the former Charringtons Oil Depot (Anglesea sidings), just north of the A5, which is now occupied by Bowmur Haulage.

The line is often proposed as a cross-regional passenger link between Worcester and Derby and could also form part of a strategic freight route avoiding the congested Washwood Heath area. The track bed is safeguarded for future rail freight use within Lichfield District Council. Chase District Council supports the reinstatement of the Walsall-Lichfield route.

We are working with Network Rail to investigate the possibility of building a Ryecroft Chord to link the Sutton Line and Chase Line – which will improve operational flexibility and freight and passenger capacity, capability and, performance. We have received assurances from them that provisions will be made in the signalling interlocking to accommodate any re-opening of the Brownhills route. We will investigate the feasibility of including the Walsall-Brownhills Line into this chord.

The 2001 Census data for Burntwood indicates about 900 commuters per day travel to and through Walsall. Linking into the residential areas of Burntwood (population 30,000) could provide viable passenger loadings for heavy rail/tram-train north of Walsall. There are suitable sites for Park & Ride just north of the A5 at Anglesea sidings or at the adjacent disused sand quarry, which is in Lichfield District.

The line to Brownhills and Lichfield has been the subject of re-opening studies several times since 1990, notably by MVA and TPI. In 2006, Faber Maunsell carried out Phase 1 of the North East Walsall Public Transport Study on behalf of Centro/Walsall MBC. This study compared Heavy Rail, Metro, conventional bus, Bus Rapid Transit and Parry People Mover as far as Brownhills and found in favour of bus or bus rapid transit. Phase 2 of the study has yet to be conducted. We will part fund the second phase of the study which will investigate the short term public transport use for this corridor in order to create patronage. The study will cover a wider brief than previous studies and include a thorough economic, environment and social appraisal and include the potential for park and ride along the corridor. Any suggested outcome must not compromise our long-term aim to reinstate heavy rail.

Tram/train is a simple concept in which light rail vehicles capable of running both on street tramway and railway lines are operated with shared use of heavy rail corridors, effectively running “in between” heavy rail passenger or freight services. We would urge Network Rail and Centro to consider the feasibility of a Stourbridge - Walsall - Lichfield tram/train trackshare with rail freight.

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Usage: Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield	
Current	Predicted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disused route 	

Track and Infrastructure: Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disused route A 10 mile section of railway alignment (former South Staffordshire Line). Track is retained from the Lichfield end to Anglesea Sidings 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain alignment Ensure signalling interlocking on other lines to accommodate re-opening of Brownhills line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall MBC/Network Rail Network Rail 	Freight and passenger capacity, capability, flexibility and performance	UDP protects formation To be included in Network Rail's Walsall resignalling scheme scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include Brownhills Line into business case for developing a Ryecroft Chord to link Sutton Line and Chase Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail/Walsall Council 	Improve operational flexibility, freight and passenger capacity, capability and performance	In discussions with Network Rail regarding feasibility
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of line for freight and passenger services, and removing freight from the Cross City South / Camp Hill lines for passenger improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with neighbouring authorities and industry partners to establish business case 	Improve operational flexibility and freight and passenger capacity, capability and performance	Aspiration

Stations and Car Parks: Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield
Current Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No stations

(Note: Immediate Priorities: 2006 – 2011; Further Goals: 5 – 10 years; Longer Term Aspirations: 11-20 years)

Longer-term aspirations	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brownhills station and others along the route Park and Ride locations along the route, both within and outside the borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/Walsall Council Centro 	Improved accessibility/convenience	To be included in Phase 2 of study

Rolling Stock, Timetables and Service Patterns: Walsall – Brownhills – Lichfield			
Current Position			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disused route 			
Immediate Priorities	Opportunities / Actions Needed	Type of benefits	Status as at October 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Phase 2 of the corridor study to investigate short-term public transport use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/WMBC 		Study Stage 1 completed, Stage 2 not yet started
Further Goals			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish short-term public transport use to develop patronage along route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro/WMBC 	Accessibility/convenience	Study Phase 2 to be carried out
Longer-term aspirations			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of line for freight and passenger services Possible tram/train 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail/freight and passenger train operators Centro / Network Rail 	Freight and passenger capacity, capability, flexibility and performance	Aspiration Aspiration

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