

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 1st June 2015

The Staffordshire Rail Strategy

Recommendations

1. To receive a presentation on the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy and consider whether any amendments need to be made in order to align with our Strategic Plan.
2. To agree for the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy (subject to any amendments) to be published for an eight week public consultation period.
3. To receive an update following public consultation.

Report of Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

4. To consider and comment upon the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy. This is an opportunity for the Committee to influence the draft strategy prior to publication for public consultation.
5. To agree for the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy to be published for an eight week public consultation.
6. Further comments from the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee are welcomed and these will be considered for incorporation within the Strategy prior to the final version being published.
7. Responses received to the eight week consultation will be considered and where appropriate final amendments will be made to the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy prior to publication. A consultation report will also be published.

Report

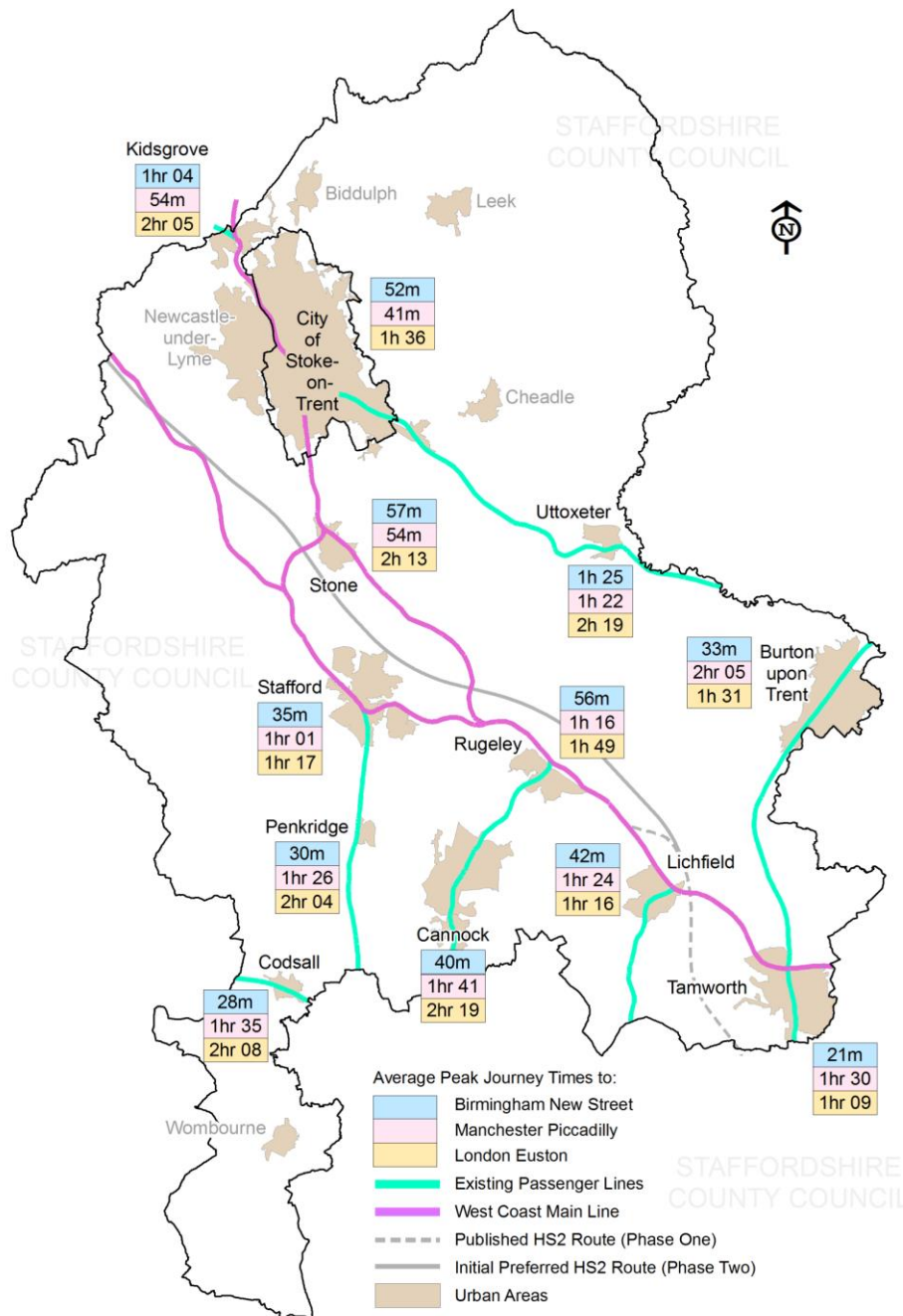
Background

8. Staffordshire is uniquely placed at the centre of the country's rail network, located on key transport arteries and corridors giving easy access to large economic centres such as Manchester and the North West, Birmingham, the East Midlands and the South East. The West Coast Mainline (WCML) runs north to south throughout the county providing frequent connections to London, Manchester and Liverpool.
9. Birmingham is just a 30 minute journey or less from a number of Staffordshire's urban areas. The main stations within Staffordshire include Stafford located on the WCML and the busiest in the county, Burton upon Trent which lies on the Cross Country Route between Birmingham and Derby, Tamworth which is served by both the WCML and the Cross Country Route and Lichfield which is served by the Cross City Route, a key commuting route into Birmingham. There are a total of 19 local rail stations in the area that offer varying degrees of connectivity to both local destinations and those further afield. Figure 1 shows the average peak journey times to Birmingham, Manchester and London.
10. Staffordshire's rail network also plays an important role in the movement of freight and is located at the centre of some important regional and national routes with good connections to a number of freight terminals. The most important freight route for Staffordshire is the WCML, one of the country's principal routes with over 50 freight trains operating along it per day in each direction.
11. The County Council is also a member of the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership which works to promote and develop the Crewe-Derby Route and is also known as the North Staffordshire Line.
12. Rail is, therefore, recognised as playing an important part in facilitating economic growth and prosperity and is vital for Staffordshire's economic competitiveness and wellbeing. There are many opportunities surrounding rail that are emerging within Staffordshire at the current time and it is essential that Staffordshire maximises the potential benefits that these opportunities may bring. It is important to recognise that this is a disparate industry and the County Council does not have significant resources to invest directly into rail. The County Council, therefore, works together with these partners acting as the voice for Staffordshire to directly influence planning and investment in the rail network. To assist with this a published guiding rail strategy is essential to effectively influence the future of rail use in the County. The final version of the Rail Strategy will contain Staffordshire's asks and will be used as a lobbying document with Government and the rail industry.

The vision for Staffordshire's railways is for:

A well connected, modern, safe, affordable, reliable, attractive and low carbon rail network that allows businesses, people and goods to connect efficiently and effectively with each other, whilst playing a central role in supporting the economic growth of Staffordshire.

Figure 1: Average Peak Journey times to Birmingham, Manchester and London



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Developing the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy

13. An extensive amount of work has been undertaken to develop the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy. This has included hosting the first ever Staffordshire Rail Summit with attendance from some 40 different organisations. Delegates included the rail industry, business, Department for Transport, local authorities, LEPs and rail promotion groups.
14. The Summit focused on identifying the key rail issues affecting Staffordshire and identifying potential priorities for investment. The results of the Summit were subsequently collated into a Staffordshire Rail Summit Workshop Report and this is published on the County Council's website.
15. Informed by the evidence gathered from the Rail Summit, a questionnaire was produced to provide both the public and rail users with the opportunity to help shape the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy. This was an online consultation and a total of 428 responses were received.
16. Press coverage included live radio coverage and the issue of a press release. Awareness of the consultation was raised through the distribution of leaflets to rail passengers at selected rail stations in Staffordshire.
17. The results of both the rail survey and the rail summit have been used to inform the content of the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy. A report of the outcomes of the rail survey will be published alongside the final version of the rail strategy as part of a suite of supporting technical documents. However, the headline results show that:
 - 56% of respondents used the train at least once a month with 19.3% using the train daily.
 - The cost of travel was the main reason respondents gave for not travelling by rail.
 - The majority of respondents supported the following Rail Strategy Objectives:
 - To encourage the growth of the economy.
 - To reduce the impacts of travel on the environment.
 - To increase connectivity for Staffordshire's residents.
 - The top three reasons for travelling by rail were leisure, business travel and commute to work.
 - The top three issues that rail users felt needed to be addressed were: overcrowding at peak times, ticketing/price of fares/availability of through fares and better direct connections from Staffordshire.

- The most important issues going forward included improving rail infrastructure and improving rail services.
 - Over half of respondents felt that both freight and passengers should be considered and given equal opportunity.
18. A focus group was also undertaken with the Youth Action Council (YAK). The outcomes from this focus group have also been used to inform the Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy.

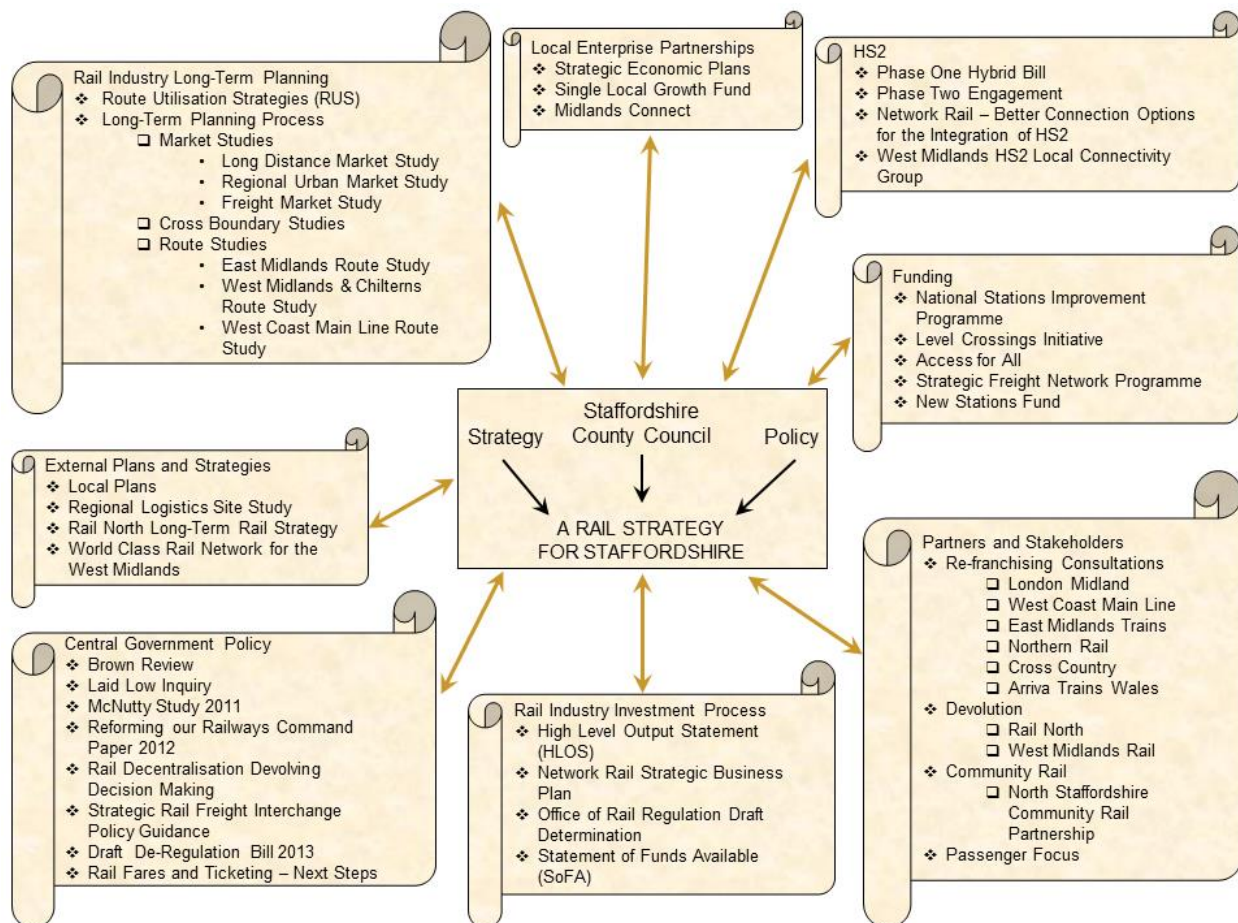
Context and Format

19. The Draft Staffordshire Rail Strategy has been produced in the form of a brochure that is structured into 7 separate and distinct chapters (introduction, economic growth, passenger rail services (local, regional and long distance), HS2 and HS2 local connectivity, rail stations as gateways, rail freight and making it happen. The Strategy will also be supported by a suite of technical documents which will be available online. This will enable the Strategy to remain a fluid document that can be easily updated on a regular basis.
20. Each chapter is framed around the following questions:
- What is happening now?
 - What is expected to happen in the future?
 - What are the objectives?
 - How these objectives should be realised
 - What are the timescales for action and collaboration?
21. The Rail Strategy sets out the role of Staffordshire's rail network now and in the future. It is objective led and sets out the challenges and opportunities facing Staffordshire's rail network together with how these can be addressed.
22. The final version of the Staffordshire Rail Strategy will:
- Provide a sound basis to effectively respond to national consultations including re-franchising.
 - Provide a clear set of priorities to enable available investment opportunities to be maximised.
 - Enable Staffordshire to take advantage of any emerging opportunities such as entrepreneurial private enterprise and open access opportunities.

- Help shape the devolution proposals for West Midlands Rail and Rail North, providing greater accountability and decision-making in relation to local rail services.
- Help shape the industry's Long Term Planning Process for future investment in the rail network.
- Help provide the best possible opportunities to gain access to existing and future national and European high speed passenger networks.
- Help plan for the best use of released capacity on the classic network upon completion of HS2.

23. Figure 2 below demonstrates how the Staffordshire Rail Strategy will integrate with and influence wider policy and strategy and support the securement of greater investment and economic growth in Staffordshire.

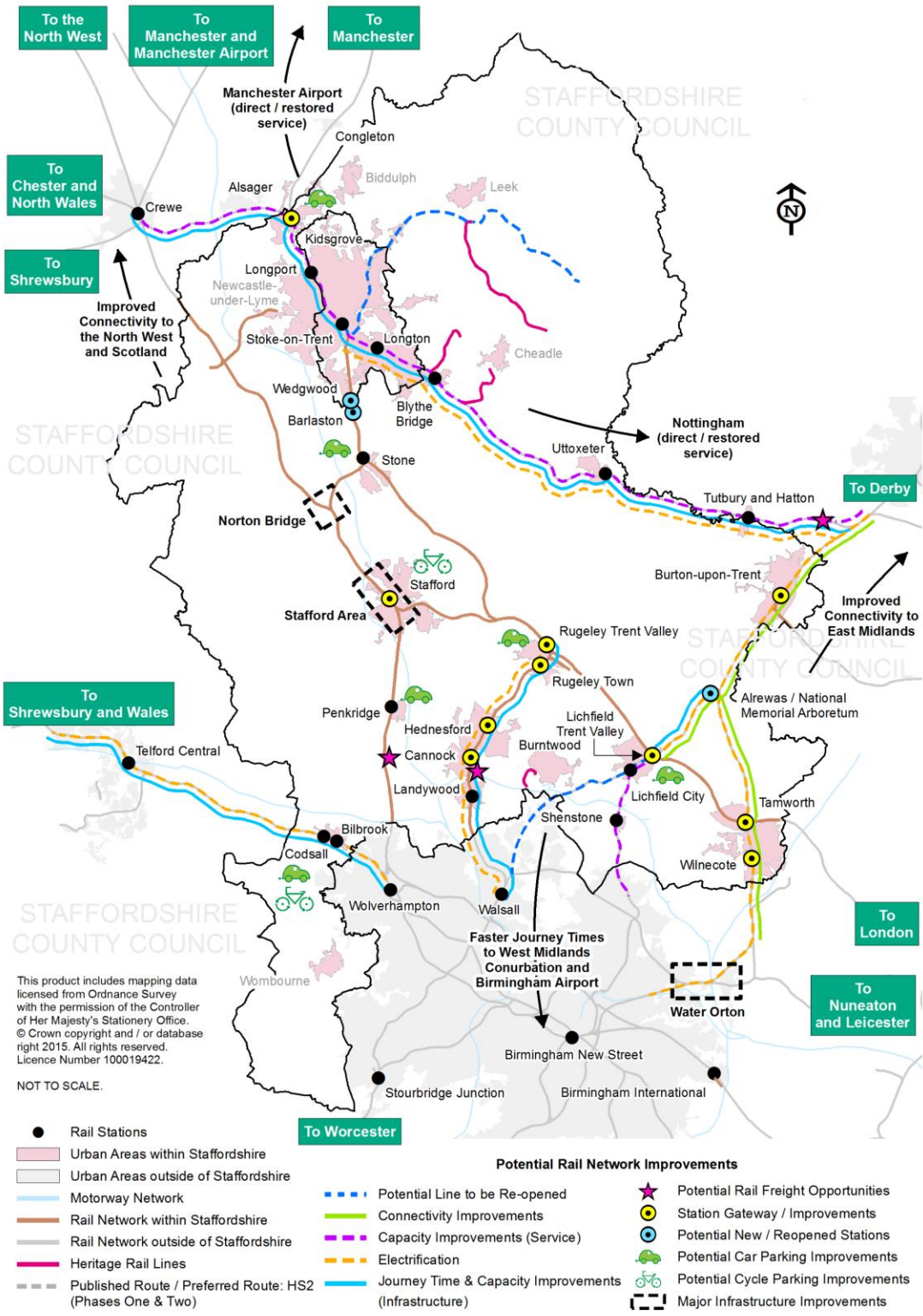
Figure 2: Staffordshire's Rail Strategy Sphere of Integration and Influence



24. To date the emerging rail strategy has been used to shape and influence Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process, Midlands Connect, West Midlands Rail proposals for devolution, Rail North's devolution proposals, local planning authorities' emerging local plans and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan.
25. To achieve the vision a series of objectives have been developed for each chapter. However, these objectives cannot be considered in isolation and individual measures to achieve the objectives will still be subject to meeting the appropriate deliverability, affordability and value for money criteria.
26. The economic growth chapter reflects the recently published Strategic Economic Plan and places strong emphasis on how transport connectivity will play a critical role in supporting economic flows and unlocking investment in necessary employment, housing and leisure developments. It also recognises that there are connectivity challenges which will need to be addressed if the LEP's growth ambitions are to be achieved and how rail can play a critical role in reducing these challenges.
27. Passenger Rail Services considers all types of rail connectivity from local through to long distance. It provides an overview of the current picture of passenger rail services in Staffordshire including a summary of typical off-peak services at some of the county's key rail stations. The chapter also identifies the key challenges and issues for passenger rail services in Staffordshire and what this will mean in the future with Network Rail's predicted growth of between 8% and 49% for travel into both Birmingham and Manchester by 2023, rising to between 24% and 114% by 2043. Based on this evidence and current planned rail infrastructure investment in Staffordshire a series of five objectives have been developed which are underpinned by the need to collaborate with the rail industry and neighbouring local authorities. The chapter explains how these objectives could be realised and the County Council's role in achieving these objectives. A plan of action and collaboration is also provided together with appropriate timescales.
28. The HS2 and HS2 local connectivity chapter provides a summary of the current position regarding HS2 together with an analysis based on HS2 Ltd published documentation of Staffordshire's suggested future connectivity on the classic rail network during each phase of HS2. This has been used to develop a series of four specific objectives. These objectives acknowledge the need to secure classic compatible services for Staffordshire whilst maximising the potential for improved rail connectivity from any released capacity on the classic network. Based on each individual objective, a series of clear asks for the classic rail network has been developed. These will provide a basis for the County Council to work with the industry and partners to try and maintain and enhance rail connectivity in Staffordshire. A series of ongoing actions for the County Council have also been clearly identified.

29. The rail stations as gateways chapter recognises the importance placed on rail stations for enabling growth and for also having a positive impact on the passenger experience - In 2013/14 there were over 10.1 million journeys at rail stations in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and station growth increased by 71% (2006/07- 2013/14) compared to 39% nationally. However, many rail stations no longer meet today's passenger needs and expectations. A recent assessment of the quality of passenger rail facilities available at Staffordshire stations has identified a number of stations that require improvements to be made to the station environment. This evidence has been used to establish five core objectives, all of which are underpinned by the need to collaborate with the rail industry and relevant stakeholders. The chapter recognises the importance of identifying innovative and alternative ways of achieving these objectives and the County Council's involvement as a partner in the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership together with its successful partnership working to deliver Kidsgrove Transport Hub has been used as an example of best practice. An action and collaboration plan together with appropriate timescales has also been developed.
30. The Rail Freight chapter summarises the crucial role that rail freight plays in the UK economy and how it is expected to grow significantly. Network Rail's freight Market Study forecasts that the rail freight market in tonne kilometres will increase by 2.9% per annum to 2043. In shaping this chapter many discussions have been undertaken with the rail freight industry and operators. This has been used to shape a series of three distinct objectives for rail freight and for identifying how these objectives can be achieved. The role that the County Council can play in helping to realise the objectives has been developed into an action and collaboration plan categorised into short, medium, long term and on-going actions.
31. The 'Making It Happen' chapter explains how the County Council will work with partners, stakeholders and the rail industry to achieve the Staffordshire Rail Strategy vision and objectives including funding and delivery mechanisms. Figure 3 below identifies a series of specific infrastructure and connectivity improvements for Staffordshire's rail network. These improvements have subsequently been further refined to prioritise them in the short, medium and long-term. A dialogue is also provided to explain why these improvements are required and the actions the County Council will take to help deliver these improvements.

Figure 3: Staffordshire Rail Network Strategic Connectivity Improvements



Next Steps

32. If our approach is agreed a formal eight week public consultation will commence. Responses to the formal consultation will then be analysed and considered. Amendments to the Staffordshire Rail Strategy will then be undertaken where appropriate prior to a final version being published together with a suite of supporting technical documents. A consultation report will also be published at the same time.

Link to Strategic Plan

33. The Staffordshire Rail Strategy links to the Strategic Priority Outcome of being able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth. In addition, the Strategy also helps to deliver a number of commissioning priorities. These include:

- Great Place to Live
- Ready for Life
- Right for Business

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

34. A previous Select Committee discussed the development of the Staffordshire Rail Strategy.

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