

Bromsgrove Rail User Group & Campaign for Rail

A Joint 'Draft Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy' Response

Introduction:

The following is a joint response submission on behalf of ***Bromsgrove Rail User Group (BRUG)*** at local level and ***Campaign for Rail (CfR)*** at regional level.

Having jointly studied the comprehensive draft 'Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy' in full, both ***BRUG*** and ***CfR*** are fundamentally in support of the County's aspirational proposals.

However, in respect of the infrastructure and passenger service enhancement aspirations, there may be certain additional aspects outlined within this joint submission the County Rail Team may consider worthy of inclusion within their final 'WRIS' document.

Joint BRUG/CfR Rail Infrastructure and Passenger Service Aspirations

1. ***Cotswold Line Track Doubling Infills*** - Together with Item 2, we acknowledge and agree that these are Worcestershire's key infrastructure enhancement requirements.
2. ***Worcester Area Capacity, Re-signalling and Operational Upgrade*** - As acknowledged above, we agree that these requirements are critical precursors to a number of the County's passenger rail service enhancement aspirations and in particular, where the City of Worcester is a core feature within any of the said enhancement proposals.
3. ***Great Malvern/Worcester to London Paddington Service Frequency Enhancement*** – Jointly, it is fully acknowledged and agreed that any such enhancement is again, wholly dependent upon the full completion of the Cotswold Line track doubling requirement, together with completion of the Worcester area enhancement requirement.
4. ***Access to Cross Country Services (at Bromsgrove) from the 2019 Franchise Renewal*** - Following the pending establishment of Bromsgrove station as the southern terminus and service interchange for the proposed introduction of the three trains per hour Cross City Line service, access to a meaningful number of the some ninety two bi-directional Cross Country franchise (weekday) timings currently passing through the station, is a highly significant and justifiable, key aspiration.

These said interchange and mainline access potentials would substantially help serve the vast catchment of frustrated latent demand that exists, centred on Bromsgrove and correspondingly, would generate substantial long distance ticket revenue.

5. ***Interchange Access between Bromsgrove and Worcestershire Parkway*** – For both logistical and environmental reasons, it is fundamental that road access between the said two stations is not exclusively determined to be the only interconnection option.

A Cross City /Cross Country joint service interchange at Bromsgrove is a fundamental key requirement for both North Worcestershire and the neighbouring south western Metropolitan County area. Also, Cross City Line passengers terminating at Bromsgrove and requiring onward access to the important London Paddington

service at Parkway, would not have the interconnection by road option available to them and clearly therefore, a valid reason why both Bromsgrove and Worcestershire Parkway should not be seen in isolation, but rather, as a fundamental interconnection requirement.

Currently, the earliest Bromsgrove-Worcester timing (at 0721) results in one Oxford (only) and four London Paddington early morning connections rendered unavailable to Bromsgrove area passengers. However, with just a nine minute journey time interval between Bromsgrove and Worcestershire Parkway, a meaningful service integration between the two stations would achieve a phenomenal overall journey time reduction between Bromsgrove and London Paddington and all the potentially available South Western destinations via Cheltenham or beyond, compared with any existing journey times via the City of Worcester stations.

6. A fundamental constraining factor associated with certain of the County's new and/or expanded service aspirations, is the currently constraining aspect of cross franchise fragmentation, whereby, certain franchise service routes within Worcestershire have limited cross franchise route access.

For example, GWR has no direct service access into any Birmingham station and correspondingly, the new WMT franchise will have no direct service association with the Cotswold Line route and hence, the latter's Avon Vale stations continue to have no direct connection into Birmingham.

7. ***Other County Rail Infrastructure and Passenger Service Enhancements*** – Direct service access, for example, to Gloucester and Bristol from Bromsgrove and indeed, from the Stourbridge Line, together with access to Birmingham from the Avon Vale stations, should be key enhancement considerations, enabling those associated Worcestershire towns to achieve greater socio-economic impact, but for which however, the outcome remains wholly reliant upon the urgent implementation of the key Worcestershire enhancement proposals outlined.
8. ***Access from Worcestershire into the Main City of Birmingham Stations*** – The existing pathing capacity constraint between Kings Norton Junction and Birmingham New Street continues to restrict any expanded service potential on the Bristol-Birmingham mainline route and although an eventual Camp Hill Line re-introduction into Moor Street would help relieve the constrained New Street access, University/QE station remains a fundamental determining factor with any alternative route consideration.

Until such time some form of access relief regarding New Street is finally determined and indeed, fully implemented, any enhanced service potential from Worcestershire stations south of Bromsgrove, we would suggest, will be difficult to satisfactorily resolve.

9. ***New Worcestershire Station Introductions*** – Apart from the already committed Worcestershire Parkway development, the County's other key new station aspiration must surely be the re-introduction of a station and turn-back facility within the ever-expanding Rushwick area of Worcester, from which, peak-time road congestion into the existing Worcester stations is a major problem and which, is further compounded by way of the severe lack of adequate parking provision at both Foregate Street and Shrub Hill stations.

With regard to the quite widely held aspiration for the re-introduction of a Fernhill Heath station facility, we realise that most unfortunately, the modern day car parking requirement would be a major limiting factor. However, both Fernhill Heath and indeed, Worcestershire's support for the Stratford to Honeybourne project, should be fundamental ongoing considerations for the County Rail Team.

10. ***Droitwich Spa to Stoke Works Junction Line Doubling*** – Enhancing the current hourly service frequency on either this line's full or part route, is of course dependent upon addressing more than just the track doubling requirement between Droitwich Spa and Stoke Works Junction. However, the significance of targeting the key University/QE station and the corresponding shorter journey time into Birmingham via Bromsgrove highlights the urgent need to substantially enhance this route's capacity.

Also, currently, Hereford-Birmingham timings are often held within the Stoke Works Junction loop, when awaiting a late running and prioritised Cross Country timing to pass on the mainline, which can impose a serious time delay. Alternatively, however, the affected local service could proceed into Platform 1 at Bromsgrove, so enabling passengers to alight and board and therefore, substantially reduce any existing imposed time delay and correspondingly, substantially aid service punctuality.

11. ***Worcestershire Station Car Park Expansions and Road Access Improvements*** – It is universally recognised that car travel is particularly difficult to justify environmentally. However, to increase modal switch to rail, the need for travel by car to the nearest train station is quite often unavoidable and therefore, new and/or expanded parking provision and corresponding improved road access at County stations, where possible, is fundamental in reducing the inherent environmental impact of any alternative overall journey by car.

Worcestershire's current levels of station parking provision is proving increasingly inadequate and particularly, when compared with station parking provision across neighbouring counties and to which, a satisfactory solution to expanding the overall County station car parking provision is urgently required.

Finally, both ***Bromsgrove Rail User Group*** and ***Campaign for Rail*** would concur in offering their best wishes to the County Strategic Rail Team in their endeavours to achieve the best possible outcome for the vitally important proposed rail infrastructure and passenger service enhancements across the County of Worcestershire and to which, we offer our wholehearted and ongoing committed support in all possible areas.

T.W.
11th August 2017