

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27 November 2019

Warwickshire Draft Rail Strategy Consultation Update

Recommendation(s)

1. That Members note the contents of this report

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The draft Warwickshire Rail Strategy 2019 -2034 has been subject to public consultation. The consultation ran from 20th July to 20th September 2019. The consultation gave key partners, stakeholders and the general public the opportunity to comment on the draft Rail Strategy and express a level of support for the policies and proposals set out in the strategy.
- 1.2 A range of methods were used to gather views during the consultation period. These included; an online survey on Ask Warwickshire using Citizen Space; a paper-based version of the standard online survey could be requested by telephone or email. Alternative formats and languages could also be requested.
- 1.4 In addition, comments in relation to the proposed draft strategy could be emailed directly to tpu@warwickshire.gov.uk. Written comments could also be sent directly to the Transport Planning Team at the County Council.
- 1.5 167 responses were submitted via the online survey; in addition the Transport Planning team received thirty eight written responses. The written responses were primarily submitted by our key partners and stakeholders, including Midlands Connect, West Midlands Rail Executive, Birmingham Airport and local Town and Parish Councils. The majority of respondents who completed the online survey did so on behalf of themselves; eleven respondents completed the survey on behalf of an organisation. These included a mix of public, private and voluntary sector agencies
- 1.6 Responses to the online survey were received from across the County, with the highest number of respondents (31%) coming from North Warwickshire Borough, only 8.4% came from Rugby Borough. The response rate for each Borough/District is shown below;

Area	All Respondents (%)
North Warwickshire Borough	31.3%
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough	12.0%
Rugby Borough	8.4%
Stratford-on-Avon District	15.1%
Warwick District	16.9%
Other, including Countywide	16.3%

2.0 Feedback

2.1 The consultation report based on the submissions received via the online survey is included in Appendix 1.

2.2 The results from the thirty eight individual submissions are in the process of being fully analysed and will be presented to Cabinet early in 2020 alongside the revised rail strategy. Headline results/analysis are included in this report.

2.3 On line survey results

2.4 Over half of respondents completing the full online survey either strongly agreed or agreed with the overview of the Warwickshire context and there was generally a high level of agreement for the Key Objectives as set out in the draft strategy.

2.5 In terms of the proposed policies, the highest agreement scores for policies were for Policy 3 - New rail services and stations and Policy 11 Rail fares and ticketing. The lowest score was for Policy 9 which sets out that the County Council will endeavour to secure the maximum benefits from HS2. This low level of support for Policy 9 may be a result of respondents using the opportunity to register their objection to HS2 overall.

2.6 Key issues raised by respondents include;

2.6.1 Table 1: Key issues raised via online survey

Key Issue	WCC Response
Specific route/station improvements in regards to frequency and quality of services. Respondents referred to a desire to see faster trains and more services at the weekends and in the evenings.	The County Council work closely with West Midlands Rail Executive and the Train Operators in attempt to secure the maximum improvements to the rail network in Warwickshire. West Midlands Trains have recently introduced more evening and weekend services across many routes and further improvements will be delivered over the life of the franchise.

<p>Better access to stations via bus and sustainable modes.</p>	<p>The County Council acknowledge that this can be problematic and work closely with the bus operators in attempt to integrate bus and rail services more effectively. Where bus services are commercial this is often difficult to achieve. Patronage can also prove challenging ; A comprehensive, subsidised bus service to the station was provided when Kenilworth Station opened, however the service had to cease due to a lack of patronage.</p>
<p>Planning improvements to take into account significant housing developments</p>	<p>Where possible and practical, improvements to the rail network do take into account significant housing developments. Proposed Improvements range from access improvements at existing stations to the development of new stations (subject to feasibility work). The County Council works closely with relevant District and Borough Councils to identify potential improvements and safeguard land through the Local Plan process, if appropriate.</p>
<p>Parking at stations in terms of availability and cost.</p>	<p>Parking at stations is an emotive topic. Across Warwickshire, the majority of rail station car parks are in control of the Train Operator, who set the parking charges. The County Council encourages the operator to set these charges appropriately, taking into account the station location, destinations of rail users and other local parking sensitivities.</p>
<p>Some concern regarding Parkway station proposals</p>	<p>The proposals for new parkway stations as set out in the draft rail strategy are subject to feasibility work. Such schemes will only be progressed if clear demand and a strong business case can be demonstrated. Parkway stations provide the opportunity for people to access the rail network and offer new connectivity between destination. If positioned on the edge of settlements they can offer the opportunity for users to either walk or cycle to the station.</p>
<p>Accessibility and rail travel for people who have a disability</p>	<p>The County Council works with the Train Operators in an attempt to improve access and travel options for people with a disability who wish to travel. Where appropriate the County Council will bid for funding, or support the Train Operators in such a bid (e.g Access for All funding) where a particular scheme has been identified. Examples include Stratford station, where lifts were provided, and Warwick Station, which was recently awarded funding for the installation of lifts. Station refurbishments (e.g. Stratford station) also provide the opportunity for the rail industry to ensure that accessibility standards are met.</p>

	All new stations and station infrastructure is built in accordance with nationally recognised accessibility standards, including those specific to the rail industry.
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2.7 Written response results

- 2.8 Thirty eight written responses were received in response to the consultation; these were primarily from our key stakeholders and partners. Table 2 below sets out the origin of written responses.

Table 2

Key Stakeholders/Partners/MPs	Town & Parish Councils
Birmingham International Airport	Ansley Parish Council
Chiltern Railways	Honeybourne & Pebworth Parish Council
Guide Dogs	Kingsbury Parish Council
Highways England	Lapworth Parish Council
Midlands Connect	Shrewley Parish Council
Network Rail	Southam Town Council
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	Welford Parish Council
University of Warwick	Rail User Groups
Craig Tracey MP	Atherstone Rail User Group
Nigel Huddleston MP	Northampton Rail User Group
Local Authorities	Rugby Rail User Group
Coventry City Council	Other
Gloucestershire County Council	Responses submitted on behalf of individuals – 6 responses submitted
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Atherstone & Mancetter Labour party
Leicestershire Country Council & Leicester City Council	Earlswood & Forshaw Heath Residents Association
North Warwickshire Borough Council	Stratford Transport Group (verbal response)
Rugby Borough Council	
Stratford –Upon-Avon District Council	
Warwick District Council	
Worcestershire County Council	
Federation of Small Businesses	

2.9 A summary of key issues raised by respondents who submitted written responses are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3; Summary of key issues from written responses

Key Issue raised	WCC Response
Service and Station improvements	
<p>Support for re-opening of the Stratford – Honeybourne line. Desire by some respondents to see this happen as soon as possible.</p>	<p>The County Council is a member of the North Cotswold Taskforce, which has committed to examining the case for the reinstatement of the Stratford – Honeybourne rail link. The scheme cannot come forward until after other capacity improvements have been delivered along the North Cotswold line and therefore this is not a scheme that can be delivered in the short /medium term. The County Council is working with the Train Operating Companies to secure further improvements to services to operating between London and Stratford.</p>
<p>Support for the development of Coleshill Parkway as an interchange hub and Henley station as a rail hub for the rural hinterland.</p>	<p>The County Council welcomes this support and is working with the relevant organisations to progress these proposals</p>
<p>Support for service improvements but concern regarding car parking availability. Some concern that public transport/sustainable travel options should be promoted in addition to/instead of increasing car parking provision.</p>	<p>Where possible the County Council will deliver improved sustainable transport provision to and at stations. Good availability of car parking availability at stations is supported as it can encourage people to switch from road to rail, for at least part of their journey. Funding for a variety of improvements will be sought from a number of sources when and where appropriate.</p>
<p>Desire to see service improvements across the network including specifically along the NUCKLE corridor and Stratford - Birmingham corridor</p>	<p>The County Council works closely with West Midlands Rail Executive and the Train Operators in attempt to secure the maximum improvements to the rail network in Warwickshire. West Midlands Trains have recently introduced more evening and weekend services across many routes and further improvements will be delivered over the life of the franchise. Some further service improvements e.g. along the NUCKLE corridor will require significant infrastructure improvements.</p>

Improved access to UK Central/HS2 interchange.	The County Council will seek to maximise access to HS2 and UKC via a range of modes, including rail. To access UKC by rail from a number of locations across the County will require an interchange due to a lack of direct rail infrastructure along certain corridors.
General support for improvements to existing station and would welcome more rapid delivery.	Improvements to stations will be delivered as soon as practical. Funding and delivery opportunities will be sought and where possible improvements will be brought forward more quickly.
New station proposals	
Comments regarding proposals for parkway stations, both in support and objections, including a desire to get a better understanding of the impact these proposals may have on other local stations and service provision.	The proposals for new parkway stations, as set out in the draft rail strategy are subject to initial feasibility work. Such schemes will only be progressed if clear demand and a strong business case can be demonstrated. Parkway stations provide the opportunity for people to access the rail network and offer new connectivity between destinations. The possible location of sites, including the impact on the local and strategic road network, will be assessed during the initial feasibility work along with the potential rail service that would be able to call at the station. If positioned on the edge of settlements they can offer the opportunity for users to either walk or cycle to the station.
General support for new station proposals and would like to see more rapid delivery.	The County Council will bring forward new stations as soon as feasible and will seek more rapid delivery where possible.
Wider connectivity improvements to stations	
Wider connectivity via other modes to and from stations, particularly by bus.	The County Council acknowledge that access to stations by bus can be problematic and work closely with the bus operators in attempt to integrate bus and rail services more effectively. Where bus services are commercial this is often difficult to achieve. Patronage can also prove challenging; A comprehensive, subsidised bus service to the station was provided when Kenilworth Station opened, however the service had to cease due to a lack of patronage. The County Council will investigate alternatives to traditional bus services such as Demand Responsive Services.

Accessibility and rail travel	The County Council works with the Train Operators in an attempt to improve access and travel options for people with a disability who wish to travel. Where appropriate the County Council will bid for funding, or support the Train Operators in such a bid (e.g. Access for All funding) where a particular scheme has been identified. Examples include Stratford station, where lifts were provided, and Warwick Station, which was recently awarded funding for the installation of lifts. Station refurbishments (e.g. Stratford station) also provide the opportunity for the rail industry to ensure that accessibility standards are met. All new stations and station infrastructure is built in accordance with nationally recognised accessibility standards, including those specific to the rail industry.
Other	
Supportive of Warwickshire's involvement in wider regional level work e.g. Midlands Connect work streams.	The County Council are fully involved in the work of Midlands Connect and seek to maximise the benefits of identified programmes of work to Warwickshire.
General support for policies as set out in the draft strategy.	

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no specific capital or revenue implications associated with the publication of the adoption of the strategy itself. However it would be noted that no funding is secured to enable delivery of the strategy and funding opportunities will be sought as appropriate.

4.0 HS2 Review

- 4.1 It should be noted that the HS2 Oakervee review is currently being undertaken by an independent panel, this review is considering the future of HS2 in terms of how the scheme will be taken forward. It is expected that the panel will report its findings to Government in October, at which point the Government will consider the recommendations of the panel with a view to making a wider announcement before the end of the year.
- 4.2 The possible outcomes of the review, in terms of substantial delay or abandonment are likely to have a significant impact on how the Warwickshire rail strategy can be delivered, especially where improvements are dependent on released capacity as a result of the delivery of HS2.

4.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 It is anticipated that the final Rail Strategy, along with a full consultation report will be taken to Cabinet in January 2020. However, as noted above, the County Council are awaiting the outputs of the review of HS2. Significant changes to the route and delivery timescales will have a significant impact on some of the proposals set out in the strategy and as a result the strategy will be subject to revision before being presented to Cabinet in March 2020.

Background papers

1. Rail Strategy Consultation Report
2. Warwickshire Draft Rail Strategy 2019-2034

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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Other members: