



**SANDWELL LOCAL PLAN - EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC
MARCH 2025**

Transportation Topic Paper

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The purpose of this topic paper is to provide contextual background, and commentary on the supporting evidence used in the approach taken in developing transport policies **STR1, STR2, STR3, STR4, STR5, STR6, STR7, STR9** and **STR10**. Policy STR8 – Parking Management is not covered by this paper.

1. The Transport Policy and Strategy Background

1.1 The Integrated Transport Authority for the West Midlands metropolitan area is the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). WMCA’s transport arm, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is the overseeing body for public transport (bus, tram, and rail) but is also responsible for preparing the statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP). The majority of central government funding for transport investment, both support for public transport services, and capital funding for transport infrastructure is devolved to WMCA, with some being passported to individual local authorities.

1.2 The Local Transport Plan is approved by the WMCA Board and is thus the adopted transport policy and strategy document for all seven local authorities within the metropolitan area. There is thus a direct relationship between the LTP; the transport policies in each authority’s Local Plan must broadly align with those contained in the LTP. Additionally, the majority of transport interventions required to support the growth proposed in local plans will be funded through funding settlements based on, and justified through, the LTP.

1.3 A new West Midlands LTP (LTP5: Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands) is in the process of being prepared and adopted. Whilst elements of this are already approved by WMCA Board, LTP5 as a whole remains a work in progress as of March 2025. Therefore LTP4: Movement for Growth remains the fully adopted Local Transport Plan for the region.

1.4 Whilst the LTP provides the overarching framework for transport investment, there are additional plans prepared at WMCA level and local authority level that help guide investment. These are:

- West Midlands Cycling & Walking Investment Plan (WMLCWIP) (2019)
- West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) (2024)
- Sandwell Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP) (2020)
- Sandwell Rights of Way Improvement plan (RoWIP) (2007)
- Sandwell Road Safety Strategy (2024)
- Black Country Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle Strategy (2020)

1.5 Many of the corridors identified in the West Midlands LCWIP and the BSIP utilise the same highway infrastructure. These routes are generally also part of the West Midlands Key Route Network. It is therefore clear that a multi-modal approach is required for the corridor improvement projects identified.

1.6 Movement for Growth identifies the following:

- Metropolitan Rail and Rapid Transit Network
- Metropolitan Key Route Network
- Metropolitan Cycle Network (The ‘Starley’ Network)
- Core Bus Network

- 1.7 The 2026 Delivery Plan identifies the following projects which are either wholly or partially in Sandwell or have significance for the borough and expected to complete during the plan period (by 2041).

Rail & Rapid Transit

- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension
- Wednesbury to Walsall Metro/Tram-Train
- Brierley hill to Stourbridge Metro/Tram-Train
- Birmingham to Quinton Sprint (Bus Rapid Transit)
- A34/A45 Sprint
- Birmingham to Dudley (via A4123) Sprint (longer-term)
- Midlands Rail Hub
- Dudley port Integrated Transport Hub

Key Route Network

- A457 Corridor (Dudley to Birmingham via Oldbury and Smethwick)
- A461 Corridor (Dudley to Walsall via Tipton and Wednesbury)
- A4034 Corridor (Walsall to Blackheath via West Bromwich and Oldbury)
- A4123 Corridor (Wolverhampton city centre to Birmingham via Dudley, Tipton and Oldbury)
- West Midlands Core Bus Network Corridors
- Motorway Junctions M5J1 and J2

- 1.8 All of the above highway-based projects are also part of the identified cycle network set out in the WMLCWIP and SCWIP. They are also core bus network corridors, so all of the projects are multi-modal in nature with improved bus priority and active travel infrastructure as key objectives.

- 1.9 As part of the suite of documents that will eventually make up LTP5, three area strategies are being prepared covering Birmingham & Solihull, Coventry, and the Black Country. The LTP Black Country Area Strategy will be reflective of, and be complementary to, the four authorities' Local Plans. The area-based strategies are unlikely to be published prior to the Sandwell Local Plan Examination in Public.

2. The overall approach to Transport in the Sandwell Local Plan

- 2.1 Given the current partially adopted status of LTP5, the transport policies contained in the Sandwell Local Plan are written to compliment the strategic direction taken in LTP4 whilst supporting the emerging approach set out in LTP5.

- 2.2 The Local Transport Plan has moved away from 'predict and provide' to vision-led approach. This began with LTP4 and has evolved further during the preparation of LTP5. Other than where very specific requirements dictate otherwise (such as the two motorway junctions), schemes will no longer be bought forward that have capacity improvements or congestion reduction as their primary objective. Since 2022, almost all local transport funding has been incorporated into the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) which in the West Midlands is allocated

to the West Midlands Combined Authority. In future funding rounds, CRSTS will form part of the Single Devolved Settlement.

2.3 All projects funded through CRSTS are required to meet the Government's transport priorities which are:

- improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform.
- improving bus services and growing usage across the country.
- transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality.
- delivering greener transport.
- better integrating transport networks.

In order to secure funding each scheme must:

- Align with the Local Transport Plan and national CRSTS funding objectives.
- Provide direct benefits to cycling and active travel and be in compliance with DfT's formal LTN1/20 guidance.
- Provide direct benefits to public transport and in particular bus travel.
- Support measures for behaviour change, road safety and network resilience.

2.4 All of the identified interventions in the Sandwell Local Plan meet these requirements. Due to issues of viability, the opportunity to secure funding contributions developers is extremely limited and, other than very local site-specific measures, 100% funding of transport interventions by third parties is unlikely. Therefore, the only likely source of funding is via WMCA or direct from the Department for Transport which will be required to meet the criteria set out above as a condition of approval.

3. Areas requiring intervention identified through supporting Transport Modelling

3.1 The transport modelling carried out to support the SLP was commissioned jointly by the for Black Country authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and the City of Wolverhampton to support the emerging local plans in all four boroughs. The following paragraphs address the output as it applies only to Sandwell.

3.2 When comparing the Reference Case committed growth against the 2019 Base Year, the modelling work indicates growth on many of the roads in Sandwell. Very high growth is seen on the motorways, mostly passing through and continuing outside the borough, and indeed the Black Country as a whole. Related to this, there are increases on the roads connecting to the M5 and M6.

3.3 The A41 also shows high growth in vehicles across the district, in both directions from West Bromwich through Wednesbury and into Walsall and Wolverhampton. Whilst many links experience a high growth in link saturation, detailed examination of the relative queue lengths reveals that only a few major roads are impacted: the A4123, A456, A4034 and A4041, and the approaches to M5 Junction 1.

- 3.4 When Local Plan growth is applied in the Do Minimum scenario, lower growth is seen on most of the major and minor roads, spread evenly across the borough with the exception of the A41 near West Bromwich, which is an area of significant housing growth. When this is assessed through queue length differences, the A4123 corridor shows the biggest impact in the AM peak scenario. The roundabout next to M5 J2 shows increased queueing on the circulatory, whilst more delays are seen further up towards Burnt Tree. These queues are seen to have an impact on delays for vehicles on the A4123 travelling northbound, but also on the A461 south of Tipton. Inter-Peak and PM peak patterns are similar, with greater impacts seen in the PM. In this period, delays are also seen at the approach to M5 J1, on the A41 to the east of M5 J1 and at the A4031/A4041 junction.
- 3.5 The strategic modelling in the Do Something scenario, i.e. with the proposed transport interventions including in the LTP and detailed in the SLP, have some impact in flow patterns, with reduced flows on the A4123 and the A41. This traffic tends to reroute to other roads such as the A4034. Many of these impacts appear to result from introduction of active travel measures and bus priority and it is accepted that this may be the case if mode share remains unaltered as in the model. In addition, the strategic model does not include the level of detail that is used in the local modelling and junction analysis work that supports the business cases for the individual interventions in these locations, nor does it take account of modal shift. In that respect the modelling suggests that further interventions would be required if a 'predict and provide' approach is adopted. However, as discussed above, the overall approach to transport in the West Midlands is to seek to reduce vehicular demand to achieve a vision where fewer trips are made overall, and of those that are, non-car modes make up a greater percentage.
- 3.6 The following are the locations that the strategic modelling concludes will see increases in queues and delays as a result of the growth set out in the SLP, along with a commentary on the interventions proposed:
- **A4123 Corridor** - £29m funding secured through the City Region Sustainable Transport settlement (CRSTS) to deliver end-to-end cycle route, targeted bus priority measures and road safety upgrades. Further funding required and a bid will be prepared for the next settlement round (2027-32)
 - **Burnt Tree (A4123/A461)** – Junction to be upgraded to incorporate improved bus measures and dedicated cycle facilities (a 'cyclops' junction) as part of the Dudley to Druids Heath Core Bus Network Corridor with secured funding from DfT through the Better Bus Fund.
 - **Birchley island (A4123)** - £30m secured funding through the DfT's Major Route Network Fund (MRNF) to deliver capacity upgrade, dedicated pedestrian and cycle facilities and improvements to the adjacent M5 Junction 1. The scheme is supported by National Highways.
 - **A461 Corridor** - £12m funding secured through the City Region Sustainable Transport settlement (CRSTS) to deliver end-to-end cycle route, targeted bus priority measures and road safety upgrades. Further funding required and a bid will be prepared for the next settlement round (2027-32). A similar sum is allocated for the Dudley section of this route and the two elements are being delivered together as a cross-boundary project.
 - **Approaches to M5, J1** – Funding has been secured from CRSTS and MRNF to develop a scheme and prepare a bid to the DfT's Large Local Major Fund for a major upgrade to this junction to address queueing issues, road safety and the current lack of pedestrian and cycling

facilities. In addition, the Birmingham to West Bromwich Core Bus Network Corridor crosses this junction and bus priority will be a feature of any design agreed. National Highways will be a partner in this project. Delivery is likely after 2032.

- **A4031/A4041 Junction (all Saints Way/Newton Road)** – This junction sits on the Sutton Coldfield to West Bromwich and Walsall to Halesowen Core Bus Network Corridors. Development funding for the latter is secured through CRSTS and Transport for West Midlands is developing proposals to support bus priority and active travel in the corridor including an upgrade to this junction. Delivery will be subject to a successful business case as part of the 2027-32 spending round.

4. Input from partner organisations

Midlands Connect

- 4.1 Midlands Connect is the sub-national transport body for the whole of the West and East Midlands. Its remit is to develop, analyse and prioritise the most important strategic-level transport investments that are needed to support a more productive, prosperous and sustainable Midlands.
- 4.2 The most recent update (2022) of the Midlands Connect Strategic Transport Plan includes the following priorities that are relevant to the Sandwell Local Plan and have, in some cases, already resulted in funding being secured:
 - Rail - Journey time improvements on the Birmingham to Shrewsbury Corridor (through Sandwell)
 - Rail – Midlands Rail Hub (including Snow Hill Platform 4 and consequent capacity upgrade on the Snow hill to Worcester Line through Sandwell)
 - Enhancing access to important junctions on the M5 and M6 motorways and the Birmingham Box.
 - A4123 Birchley Island/M5 Junction 2 Improvement, Oldbury.

National Highways

- 4.3 National Highways has been consulted on the Transport Modelling Study. A detailed technical note was prepared by consultants acting on NH's behalf (21st November 2024) which forms part of the agency's representation to the regulation 19 Plan. In response SMBC commissioned additional work and this was shared with NH in December 2024.
- 4.4 Following this additional work NH wrote to the Council setting out the matters that will require further consideration as land use proposals come forward and as the transport interventions are developed. On the basis that these areas of work are agreed by the Council, NH has confirmed that there are no outstanding matters that it considers affect the soundness of the SLP.
- 4.5 As far as intervention locations are concerned, NH's has specific interest in the proposals to address M5 junction 1 and 2. These are dealt with in paragraph 3.6 above.

