

BIRMINGHAM PLAN 2031

Statement by CPRE Warwickshire

MATTER G – Spatial Delivery of Growth – Policies GA1-GA4 and GA7-GA10

Matters covered: City Centre (GA1); Bordesley Park (GA7); Eastern Triangle (GA8)

(5) Does the Plan give sufficient recognition to the role and impact of HS2 in the City Centre?

(6) Should policy GA1.4 identify alternative / additional new stations in the city centre?

The Plan sets out the City Council's view of the HS2 station proposal and talks up its contribution. The Eastside Masterplan indicates in its illustrations a range of offices and other commercial developments to the north and south of the large HS2 station.

The role of HS2 in the City Centre will not be to act as a new focus because it is a separate station unconnected to other rail services. It will accentuate and perpetuate the current lack of integration caused by this feature already. From the HS2 station (Curzon Street) to New Street will be between 500 and 1,000 metres (up to 1,000 metres to get from one train to another) with no public transport between them. The existing route between New St and Moor St stations shows the defects; with HS2 these will be increased. The separation of the stations is not recognised in Policy GA1. This problem will lead to adverse impacts – the need for taxis and other ways to move between Curzon Street and New Street.

An alternative which can be indicated on the Policies Map without much if any alteration is to provide in the Policy, and by a small change to the Policies Map, for a station at Curzon Street which serves all train services that now pass the site, as well as high-speed trains. In other words a through station, not a terminus. This is shown on the second attached map of the City Centre.

This alternative would be similar to if not the same as the 2007 proposal for a 'Grand Central' station at Eastside which the City Council (at officer level) was offered by Arup at that time. It was rejected in favour of the commercial rebuilding of New Street station (which does not alter the railway or increase its capacity); without Councillors having been asked to consider it. A copy of the Arup proposal for this central station for the City is attached, along with press reports in 2008.

A station of this integrated, multi-purpose type at Eastside would achieve the objectives of the Plan better than can the present stations and official plan. The 'Grand Central' major station would be considerably better and would act as means to integration. It would also ensure the expansion of the city centre to the east, in commercial terms. It would have platforms for all lines (by integrating with the through platforms at Moor Street) and would enable high-speed trains to interchange with other services. The HS2 Curzon Street scheme would not.

While this form of station would cost more than the HS2 separate terminal, it would integrate services, maximise users' convenience, and delivery for the city a major station served by all train services.

The Policies Map and the Safeguarding Zone would need to be amended slightly, but the extent of safeguarding would not be very different from that in the Published Plan. The difference is that

the existing tracks leading into New Street station would be included, not left as they are to carry trains passing the new HS2 station without stopping.

The Plan will thus be open to alternatives and not restricted to supporting only the official HS2 Ltd route. It is only provides for the official HS2 station, despite the known defects of this. The present proposal is not the best when compared to all other alternatives – which is one of the tests for ‘soundness’ of a Plan.

Policy GA1.4 should list potential additional stations in the central area (which can be taken as the area within the Middle Ring Road), and show them on the Policies Map.

At present there are parts of the central area which are 1.5 km or even 2 km from a railway station. That makes commuting by rail more difficult, and encourages car use in the peak hours for commuting. Better coverage by stations within the Middle Ring Road would encourage modal shift. The following locations should be identified on the Police Map:

- A station on the New St to Wolverhampton line under the National Indoor Arena (NIA), and close to the ICC and Broad Street. The NIA is built over the line and space was left for platforms largely under the NIA on either side of the tracks; but no progress has been made in developing this plan.
- A relocated Bordesley Station at Deritend, which would serve the many businesses in the Digbeth, Bordesley and Deritend areas. Bordesley station is only open on Saturdays when Birmingham City FC plays at home, and has very poor access; it is too far east. A relocation by 300 m to the west would create a new station for use by all accessing businesses in the southeast part of the central area, and would be the equivalent of Jewellery Quarter station which serves the northwest part.
- New access to Five Ways station for pedestrians from the north side of the Middle Ring Road. At present Five Ways, while well-located in theory, is difficult to access from the southern part of the central area. Its entrance is on the noisy and wide Middle Ring Road, and there is no direct route to it from the part of the central area to the north of the MRR. Five Ways should also have better access from the south (the residential Edgbaston area).

If the coverage of the central area is not extended by more stations, the Plan will not be sound as regards its policies for public transport for the city centre.

(15) Should the policy give greater recognition to the need for improvements to the River Rea and to the East Birmingham Rapid Transit route?

The ‘East Birmingham Rapid Transit’ appears to be a plan for a higher-grade bus service, with a notional Midland Metro extension along the A45 at some future date. This is the wrong way to develop public transport in the eastern corridor from the city centre to the NEC and the Airport, not least as Midland Metro (tram) for this corridor seems a long way off.

Much more important is the existing main line railway between New Street and Birmingham International. This line is currently unable to deliver the high quality local public transport that is wanted, because it is two-track and fast trains take priority. Frequency of Centro local services is too low and punctuality is difficult to maintain.

The policy should provide for 4-tracking of the New Street to Birmingham International line, which crosses it, to provide for a frequent local rail service; and either relocation of Adderley Park station or an additional station between Adderley Park and Stechford.

(16) Is Stechford's designation as a Local Centre appropriate in the context of the Eastern Triangle proposals, or should it be upgraded?

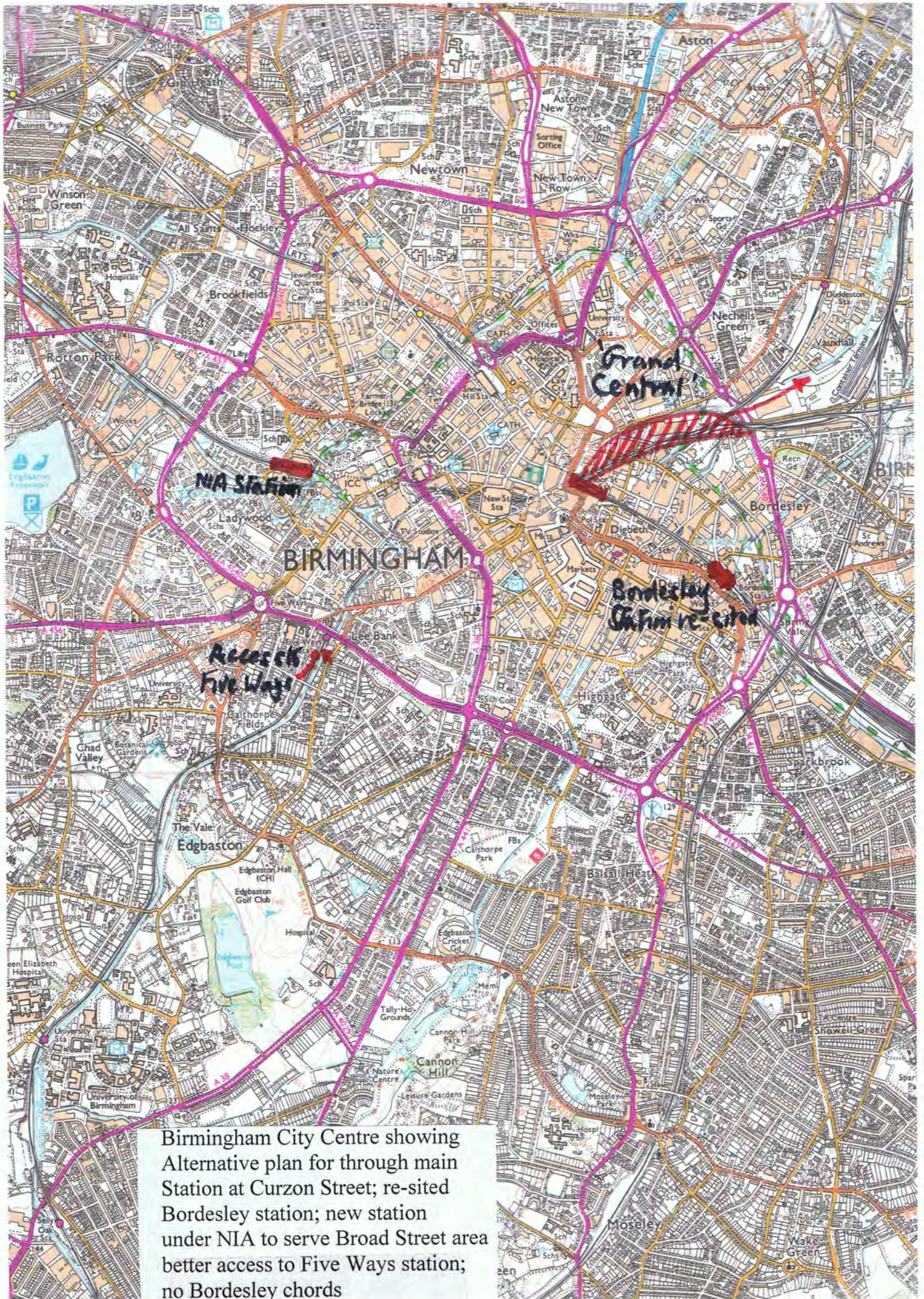
In early consultation on the Plan, the concept of a significant new centre for the eastern part of the city was put forward. This suggested a new centre with a railway station on the New Street-Birmingham International line.

This proposal seems to have been dropped with only local centre designation now being offered for Stechford, the most accessible location. But Stechford was the obvious location for the principle centre for the eastern part of the city, with a railway station and good accessibility, whereas Sheldon is blighted by the A45 passing through the heart of its shopping area. There is no other more suitable location as centre of the Eastern Triangle.

If the line can be enlarged to four tracks and a frequent local service provided between New Street and International (every 10 mins as on the Cross-City line), Stechford would be in a good position to develop as a significant commercial and service centre. (At Stechford itself the track formation is four tracks wide.)



Birmingham City Centre showing current plan for HS2 terminal and Bordesley Chords



Birmingham City Centre showing Alternative plan for through main Station at Curzon Street; re-sited Bordesley station; new station under NIA to serve Broad Street area better access to Five Ways station; no Bordesley chords

Unlocking the Network

Birmingham Grand Central Station

ARUP

A Vision

Birmingham is the UK's second city. It is at the heart of the Country and currently sits at the hub of the Country's road and rail transport network.

Our vision for Birmingham is that of a city that capitalises on that strategic advantage and on its unrivalled geographic position. It is a vision for transport in 2015 and beyond, one that maintains the City as a major European business and cultural centre.

Our legacy will affect the city far into the future. Investment now will be a key to the success of Birmingham into the 22nd Century.

Birmingham is not alone in this vision. Manchester and other major UK cities increasingly challenge its position and are investing in their own environment to secure their future. In Birmingham's case the investment is happening, but it may not be rapid and focussed enough to keep up with its rivals.

As a recent market analysis by Catherine Riley of the Times noted, *"For Birmingham truly to come alive and reclaim the title of Britain's second city it needs to look to its own people, its inner ability and ambition. Manchester is a recognised leader in areas such as style and trends and sporting excellence: Birmingham now needs to make progress in these areas truly to compete, or the greatest piece of construction in the region will be seen as the M6 Toll, whisking investment between London and Manchester."* (The Times, July 8, 2005)

We believe that in order for Birmingham to capitalise on its location it must have a major new railway station capable of serving the city's need for additional capacity into the next century. It goes beyond the currently planned project to rejuvenate Birmingham New Street Station; recognising the need for, but also the unavoidable limitations of, that project.



Birmingham A European City at the Hub of the UK Rail Network

The Transport Challenge

The city of Birmingham is currently at a crossroads: either it stays at the hub of the national rail network, or it risks being marginalised. It is imperative that Birmingham address this challenge in the near future.

Between 1995/6 and 2004/5 rail passenger journeys in the West Midlands have increased by about 44%, and at Birmingham New Street Station passenger numbers have increased by about 53%. In the next ten years they are expected to rise a further 28%. Due to its proximity to London, Birmingham depends on good rail links. Air travel is not an alternative for such a short distance.

Regional travel has grown particularly strongly and is currently running at an annualised rate of about 6%. This is important for Birmingham as it seeks to maintain its position as the most accessible city outside the Capital. Fast and frequent services are essential so that it remains attractive for travellers from other UK provincial cities.

Birmingham recognises that a transport policy that relies on growth in private car usage is not sustainable—Birmingham and its surrounding counties need a solution that offers opportunities for new routes and which enhances cross-city and inter-city route provision. They need a solution that opens up the possibility of providing new capacity as demand rises and as new areas of the city and the region develop.

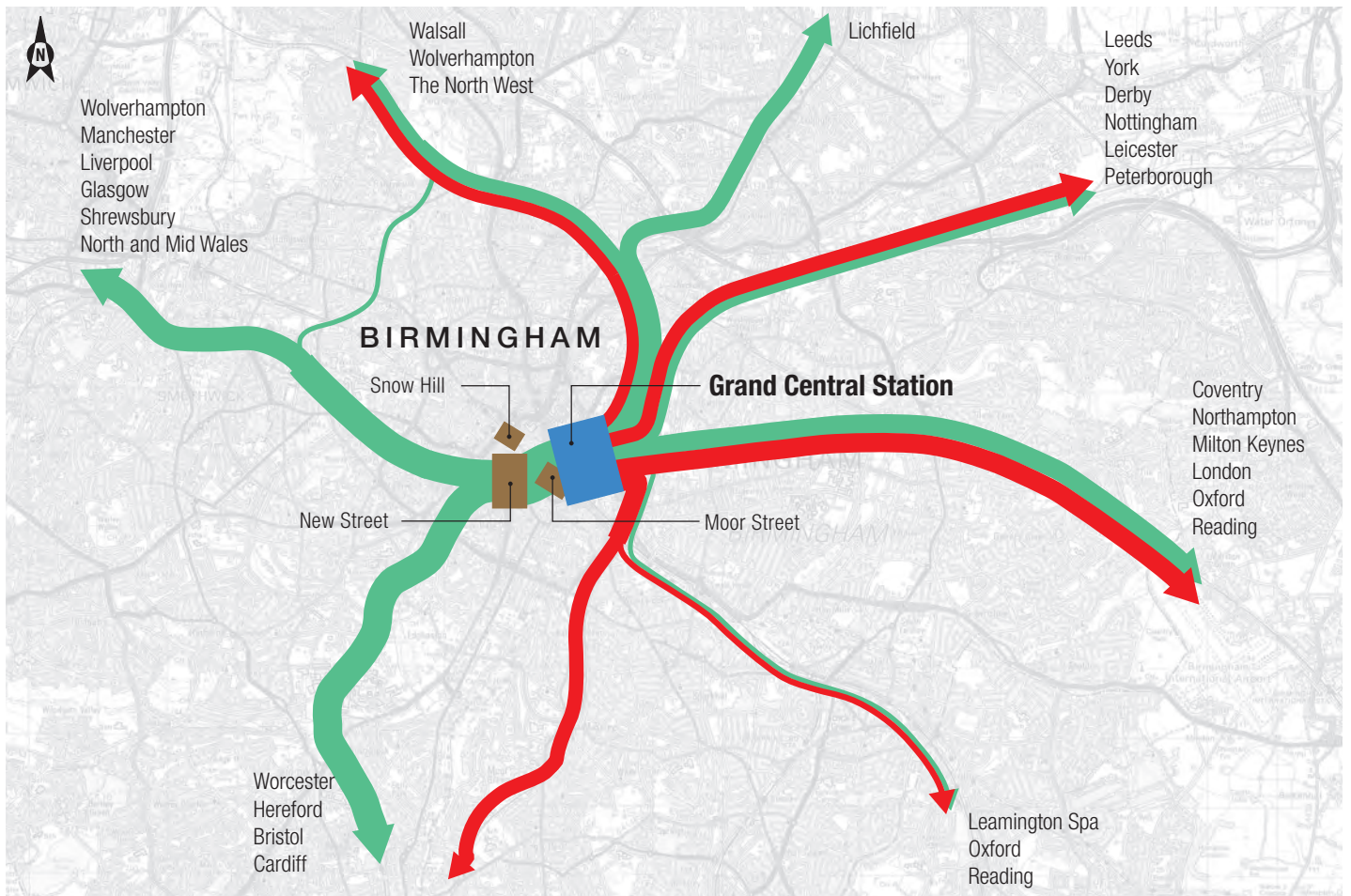
The challenge is to develop an integrated transport system—joined-up journeys (train/bus/tram/taxi/foot) to get people out of cars. It needs the system to be flexible to respond to the transport and development demands of the next century and beyond.



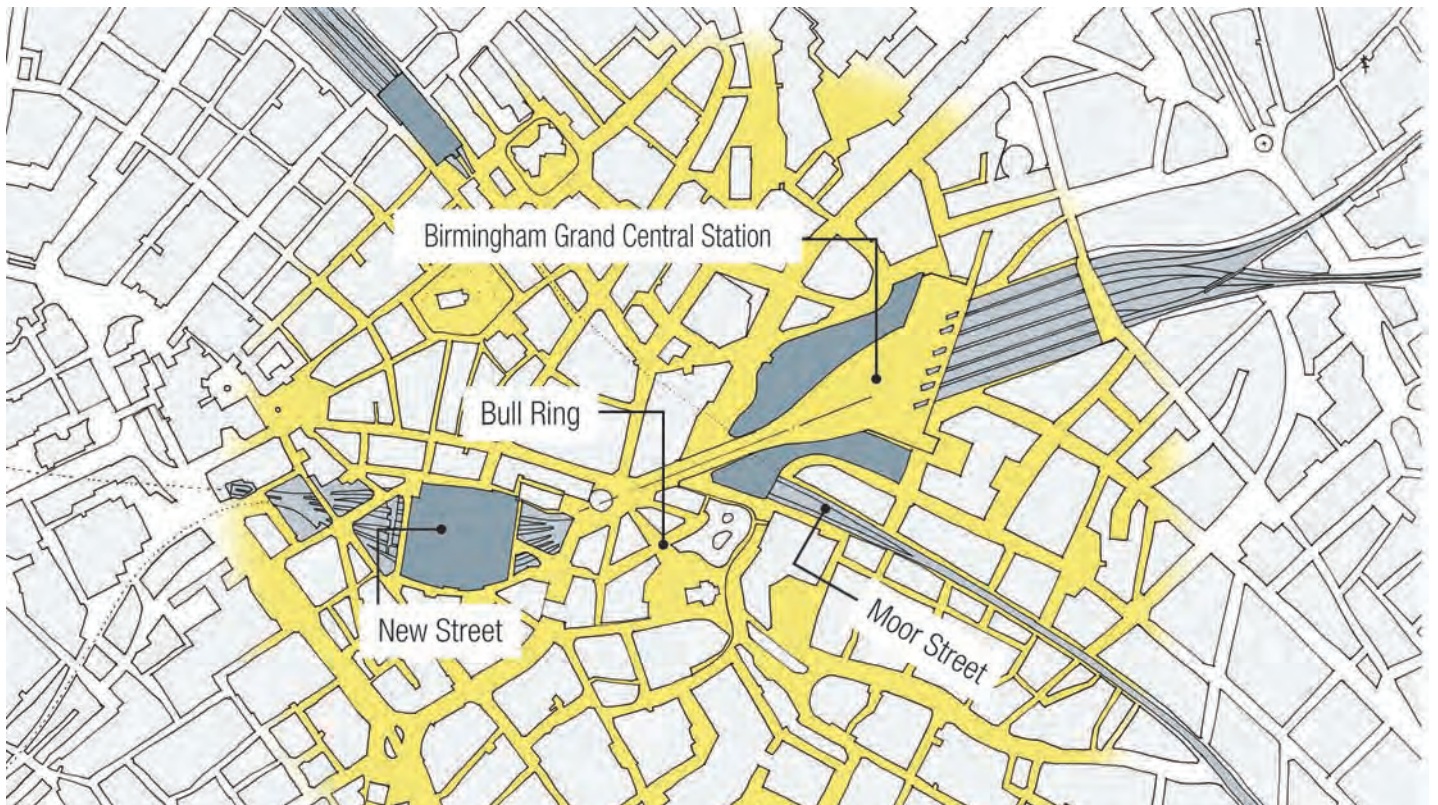
A legacy for future generations

Birmingham Grand Central Station

More Routes, More Capacity, At the Heart of the City



More Routes, More Capacity



At the Heart of the City

Transport Solutions

Now

The currently planned upgrade of New Street Station will provide much needed improvement to the City's Gateway. While delivering the project will be challenging and possibly disruptive, it should provide:

- Enhanced passenger facilities
- Increased passenger capacity
- Improved aesthetics

It is a good start, but this solution only works for the short term because:

- It offers **no increase** in the number of platforms – a constraint on the number of trains that it can accommodate (it is already near capacity at peak times)
- It offers **no change** to the congested rail approaches to the existing station, limiting capacity and lengthening journey times
- There can be **no change** to the current curved platforms—which slow down the operations of the station and hinder disabled access

A potential next step—the provision of longer trains—increases the capacity of each train, but doesn't increase the number of services or relieve congestion around the station. Little else can be done to improve New Street and, consequently, today's challenges will re-emerge and grow worse within a few years.

Next

The current long-term plan appears to hinge on a deep tunnel to provide cross-city routes. This would provide additional capacity, but its cost and feasibility may make it unaffordable or impossible.

Our plan is for a new and visionary Gateway to Birmingham—**Birmingham Grand Central**—which looks beyond the current upgrading plans and provides flexible future capacity and connections, safeguarding the City's transport opportunities for decades to come.

It will:

- Provide the opportunity for **additional services** and routes both within the city and inter-city in the future—this means more trains to key destinations and more through trains.
- Provide for a **single station concourse** incorporating Moor Street Station
- Provide significant additional **station capacity**.
- Safeguard additional **long-term** rail capacity.
- Be an **integrated transport hub**, providing a modern, high-quality and efficient/**intermodal transfer facility** for trains, metro, buses, taxis, cars and pedestrians.
- Provide a magnificent **Gateway to Birmingham**—appropriate to its stature in a modern Europe; light, airy, efficient, safe and convenient.
- Act as a **catalyst** to the planned development of the City's East Side—it facilitates excellent connectivity across the railway corridor.
- Provide the opportunity for Birmingham to accommodate a potential **High-Speed Line**.
- Release **valuable land at New Street**.

Birmingham Grand Central Station can substantially be constructed to the side of the existing rail lines, limiting disruption to the existing rail network and all train services to a minimum.

Improvements to New Street would be limited to those required in the short-term, and those needed in its future role as a secondary station for Birmingham.

To plan for Grand Central Station now would unlock the future transport demands of the region and provide the flexibility to respond to the needs of the next century.

	Birmingham Gateway (New Street)	Longer Trains	Deep Tunnel Option	Birmingham Grand Central
Enhanced Passenger Facilities (Short-term)	✓			
Enhanced Passenger Facilities (Long-term)			?	✓
Capacity for additional routes			✓	✓
Keeps Birmingham at the UK rail hub			?	✓
Provides for long-term rail passenger growth			✓	✓
Catalyst for development			?	✓
Known to be feasible and costed	✓	✓	?	✓
Appropriate Gateway for a modern European City	?		?	✓
Indicative Cost Comparator	1		3	1

Why act now?

It is critically important to act now. The opportunity to build such a transport hub at a place where two rail lines intersect is unique, but unless the land is safeguarded now it will be lost for generations to come.

The city has a window of opportunity that will close as the East Side development moves forward. It is now or never!

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Birmingham Post 13 February 2007

PERSPECTIVE: Grand vision must be turned into a reality

As Birmingham waits for the redevelopment of New Street Station, Colin Stewart, from Ove Arup & Partners, fears that time is running out for the Grand Central Station dream.

Byline: Colin Stewart

Birmingham is uniquely placed. It sits at the crossroads of the rail network, which should give it significant advantages over other cities. Couple this with proximity to London, which discounts flying to the capital, and the importance of a proper functioning rail network on the future prosperity of the area becomes obvious.

Yet there must be few, if any, travellers through Birmingham New Street who have not experienced delay while trains stand outside the station, waiting to get in, because New Street Station and its approaches are close to operating capacity now.

So what is the problem with New Street? Put simply, several rail lines cross and converge here, but cannot get in to New Street, because the tunnels either side act as bottlenecks, throttling the station.

To the east, six tracks converge on New Street, but have to go down to two to reach the station. This is the equivalent of reducing lanes on a motorway to go through roadworks, and we all know the effect this has.

At Arup, we identified this problem many years ago, and put together a proposal called Birmingham Grand Central Station with Chartered Surveyor Murray Rayner, which would overcome these constraints and solve the Midlands rail capacity problems.

Birmingham Grand Central is a new station to the East of Selfridges, located where many more existing train tracks can enter it directly than is possible at New Street. This gives considerable increase in train capacity and future proofing, not only because of the direct connectivity, but also because trains will then be able to use the existing routes around Birmingham to enter from the east.

There will be up to 17 platforms and the station will provide a complete multi-modal transport hub, with bus, taxi, metro, drop-off and car parking. It will also link directly to Moor Street Station in a combined concourse, giving the city world class transport connectivity, and should high speed trains become a reality then it will be compatible with these too.

Compare this with the currently proposed redevelopment of New Street (called the Gateway), which purely provides more elbow space to passengers at concourse level. It does nothing to provide more train paths, and hence does nothing to increase train frequency in the Midlands.

The decision to proceed with the Gateway project appears to hang on the "Birmingham and West

Midlands Rail Capacity Review" published last year.

This short document recognises many of the problems, and even states "New Street station throats and its eastern approach will then become the biggest capacity constraints on the regional network in the future". It relies on longer trains, rather than more trains, and renewed signalling. Both of these create their own technical difficulties, as described by Lord Snape recently.

More worrying is that it relies on annual growth in rail use reducing to the lowest it has been for the last 15 years. It also ignores any changes in road use management which are being considered, and doesn't appear to be compatible with the airport development plans.

By contrast, Birmingham Grand Central Station provides the visionary solution the city deserves. It provides the flexible total transport node Birmingham needs, and could be accomplished within timescales and costs of a similar order to the current New Street redevelopment without the disruption and inconvenience to passengers of working on a functioning station.

Once Birmingham Grand Central Station is open, New Street would be reduced in size to act as a local station, enabling a more cost effective redevelopment of the whole New Street site.

This proposal has now gained considerable support from those who appreciate that the constraints at New Street cannot be overcome without such a visionary change.

However, our requests for an independent review to compare Birmingham Grand Central Station with the Gateway have currently gone unanswered. Time is slipping away, and once the East Side is developed the land will no longer be available, and Birmingham will have lost this unique opportunity for ever.

Colin Stewart is director & global rail business leader at Ove Arup & Partners.

CAPTION(S):

Commuters rushing through New Street Station IF061006STATION-27 Picture, IAIN FINDLAY;
BIRMINGHAM GRAND CENTRAL STATION

Appendix to CPRE Statement Matter G

Centro Press Release 16 February 2011

Date: 16-Feb-11
Category: News : Rail
Contact: Swingler, Steve

Work to solve Birmingham and Coventry rail bottleneck needed in addition to high speed rail

Two extra railway tracks need to be laid along the West Coast Main Line (WCML) between Birmingham and Coventry well ahead of any opening of the proposed high speed rail link if the West Midlands is to meet ever rising demand for local rail travel, Centro, the region's transport authority, said today.

Backed by a number of West Midlands MPs, Centro has called on train operating companies to make four tracking of the line between the two cities a key part of any bids to win the forthcoming 14-year franchise for the WCML which is due to start next year.

Centro chief executive Geoff Inskip, said: "Apart from the £1.5 billion a year boost to the West Midlands economy and the 22,000 new jobs that a high speed rail link between London and Birmingham (HS2) will bring, we have to build it because the WCML will reach full capacity by the mid 2020s.

"However, the existing stretch between Birmingham and Coventry is already a bottleneck that impacts on the reliability of the services running on it and it is extremely difficult to get any more trains through this pinch point.

"This capacity problem will only get more acute in the next few years and will reach saturation point by 2021, five years before HS2 is due to open.

Once we hit that point ten years from now some tough choices will have to be made between the inter-city and local services operating on the line.

"There is a very real risk that local services could be pushed out in favour of more profitable inter-city trains, thereby damaging local economies and stifling economic growth and job creation.

"We therefore cannot afford to wait for HS2 and are calling on train companies looking to bid for the WCML franchise to make a commitment to four tracking the line between Birmingham and Coventry. Indeed even after the proposed high speed line opens, four tracks on this stretch of railway will remain crucial to meet demand."

Mr Inskip said that the longer, 14-year period of the next WCML franchise should give train companies the security to commit to the investment needed to lay the two extra tracks between Birmingham and Coventry. He also called for Network Rail to consider the four tracking proposal as part of its forthcoming Rail Utilisation Strategy.

A report released this week by pro-HS2 company Greengauge 21 released showed how the proposed high speed rail link between London and the West Midlands would release badly needed capacity on the classic rail network.

It said that in the West Midlands this would allow increased service frequencies to local destinations such as Lichfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton and Rugby and more regional services linking towns currently without direct services. Places like Kenilworth could also have new services such as a direct London service.

But Mr Inskip said: “Despite the benefits HS2 brings to the wider regional rail network, the issue of capacity for both passenger and freight services between Birmingham and Coventry needs to be dealt with far sooner.

“That is why we want to see the four-tracking proposal included in the franchise bids that are now or about to be submitted.”

Centro this week met with seven West Midland Labour MPs at Parliament to brief them on how the region would benefit both economically and transport-wise from the proposed high speed rail link. Four tracking between Birmingham and Coventry was one of the issues that the MPs said they were keen to see addressed.

Centro, Birmingham City Council, the NEC Group, Birmingham Airport, Solihull Council, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Marketing Birmingham are all supporting the Government’s high speed rail plan which is due to go out to public consultation shortly.

Mr Inskip added: “The case for HS2 cannot be overstated, it is quite simply the biggest opportunity for wealth and job creation in a generation.”

Last updated : 16-Feb-11

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Birmingham Post 29 July 2014

Grand Central station plan was snubbed by council 'half-wits'

- [Jul 29, 2008 23:59](#)
- By **Birmingham Post**

The man behind plans for a £2 billion main railway station at Birmingham's Eastside has hit out at "half-wit" politicians for failing to back the idea.

The man behind plans for a £2 billion main railway station at Birmingham's Eastside has hit out at "half-wit" politicians for failing to back the idea.

Murray Rayner said he remained convinced that the project was the only viable way to meet growing demand for travel by train and that the city council scheme for a £600 million refurbishment of New Street Station would be "full to bursting" on the day it opened.

Mr Rayner was speaking after the House of Commons Transport Committee described the New Street Gateway proposal as a "cosmetic" exercise which, while creating additional space for passengers to wait in airport-style concourses, would not provide extra track capacity or address the bottleneck of trains queuing to get into the station through narrow tunnels.

The MPs urged the Government to look again at the possibility of building a new station at Eastside.

Mr Rayner, a surveyor, who played a major role in designing the Bullring shopping centre, worked with construction firm Ove-Arup to develop proposals for Grand Central.

At the beginning of 2006, Alistair Darling, then the Transport Secretary, said he was concerned that Gateway would not address capacity constraints and he would re-examine the case for a new station at Eastside.

But the Government subsequently backed New Street Gateway and agreed to commit £400 million to the scheme, with the rest of the cost being covered by private sector contributions.

The new-look station is expected to be completed in 2014.

Mr Rayner accused the council and its partners, Advantage West Midlands, Network Rail and Centro, of failing to take Grand Central seriously.

He said: "There is only so much we can do. If the politicians have decided they want to be half-witted, then that is it.

"The council hasn't been prepared to see us or talk to us and I think that is slightly odd.

"I could understand it if they had weighed up the evidence and then decided to go for Gateway, but they have never given a reason and we have had no reasonable debate about it.

"Whenever anyone mentions Grand Central people at the council go apoplectic. Why are they so worried?"

Under Mr Rayner's plans New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill would remain open as secondary stations to the central hub at Eastside, which would be situated at one of the few places where the large number of lines which serve Birmingham can be separated.

Moor Street and Grand Central would be connected by pedestrian walkways and could share a central ticket office.

He said there were no plans to demolish the Gun Barrel Proof House at Digbeth or to flatten most of the Warwick Bar conservation area to make way for Grand Central – an assertion made by Councillor Martin Mullaney, the chairman of the city council transportation scrutiny committee.

Mr Rayner added: "We are talking about a major project that would do tremendous things for the dynamism of the whole city.

"Grand Central could probably be achieved for less than £2 billion. But they are planning to spend £400 million of Government money on New Street and that doesn't even do anything for capacity.

"The capacity at New Street just isn't going to be feasible. The chances are the capacity will be full to bursting on the day it opens

"As for airport-style lounges, I have never heard of them in a railway station environment."

Birmingham City Council reiterated an appeal made earlier this week by chief executive Stephen Hughes to stop indulging in "pointless arguments" about Grand Central.

Mr Hughes said he accepted there could be problems with rail capacity in the future but this could be resolved by building an £11 billion high speed link between Birmingham and London, running out of Moor Street Station.

Further debate about Grand Central was a waste of time because land earmarked for the scheme had been sold, Mr Hughes added.

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