

Redditch Borough Council – Worcestershire Draft Rail investment Strategy Response

1 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Worcestershire Draft Rail Investment Strategy (WDRIS), the below comments at this stage represents an officer response. Due to the tight timescale for consultation, there have not been any appropriate council meetings for this response to be considered formally. This process will take place in September and should any amendments be required as a result of the formal consideration process we will advise you in due course.

2 The Council welcomes the ambitious plan for investment in rail infrastructure. It has long been recognised in many forums and documents including the infrastructure delivery plan, which accompanies the Councils recently adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan No4 (BORLP4) that significant investment in all types of physical and social infrastructure are needed to support the development planned for across the Borough

3 It is acknowledged that the WDRIS supports the development of the Worcestershire LTP4 these comments have been made with previously submitted comments on the LTP4 in mind, and in some instances cover some of the same concerns. As it is supporting the LTP4 it would have been beneficial if the WDRIS was published for consultation at the same time as the LTP4 in order to provide a full and more coherent response to both documents.

4 As expressed in the Councils response to LTP4 a significant issues is the lack of an overall transport strategy for Worcestershire and in particular concern to RBC, north Worcestershire. The production of the WDRIS in isolation from an overall strategy or complimentary strategies for other forms of transport highlights this point further. It is difficult to judge what the impacts of the improvements for rail provision will actually make, bearing in mind that rail transport in all cases also relies on other forms of transport, walk/cycle/bus/car to access the rail services in the first instance. Without similar complimentary strategies and investment in these other forms of transport, there is a concern that the impacts of the investment in rail provision will not be fully be realised.

5 With these factors in mind we would echo previous comments submitted in relation to the LTP4 consultation, that an overall transport strategy for North Worcestershire is an essential project going forward. We would also reiterate the Council is committed to working with WCC and other stakeholders to prepare and implement a strategy which helps inform future land use choices and subsequently then delivers the infrastructure required.

6 An additional concern with the rail investment strategy is it is to internally focused on the rail network and not does not sufficiently link to other key influences. This is not just the other modes of transport as mentioned above, but also the wider development that is planned for across the Borough. It is acknowledged in chapter 4 that reference is made to the adopted BORLP4 as well as many other plans, which is welcomed. What is not clear is, if/how this information has directly

informed the conditional outputs in the later chapters of the plan. Whilst it is safe to assume that new development should place further pressure on the rail network, what is unclear is if the decisions for investment has clearly been linked to the location and quantum of further development.

7 Another important point to note it that future planning decisions will be made on new locations and quanta for growth which is acknowledged at various points within the strategy, these decisions will have an impact on the need for future rail infrastructure. It is important that an element of flexibility is built into the strategy in order for future land use decisions to be adequately supported by appropriate infrastructure. This further strengthens the needs for an overall transport strategy.

8 RBC are also concerned that not enough attention has been paid to facilities and services in relation to the Borough. The Council has previously expressed a desire for an express train linking Redditch with Birmingham along the cross city line, it is hoped that this train would only stop at University and then New Street. This express link alongside fair parity with the wider west midlands area would help and encourage people and businesses to locate in the Borough as they would be linked the major economic hub of the city by a fast and direct train service. It is disappointing that this has seemingly not been considered within this strategy, whereas the strategy has looked at, albeit to rule out providing further services from Redditch to the south, which has not been discussed with the Borough Council.

9 Parking improvements at railway stations have been included as a conditional output it is assumed this includes the 151 specified for Redditch in table 3.15. Reference is made to a draft WRIS2 car parking study, we have been advised that this study is not yet available which is disappointing. In order to comment further on the likelihood of any parking improvements being made this study should be provided as soon as possible and we would request a similar amount of time to respond to it.

Other minor comments are

10 Section 4 also incorrectly includes the Kidderminster / Bewdley area in the greater Birmingham HMA, para 2.48, 4.52 and then 5.4 of the phase 2 report identifies Wyre Forest as being outside the Greater Birmingham HMA.

11 The bottom of para 4.4.2 the document incorrectly states the Bromsgrove plan is still in the planning process.

RBC Development Plans

10.8.17