

CABINET

Report Title	Cross City Bus Package 3 – Dudley to Druids Heath via Oldbury and Smethwick
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 9 April 2025
Report Author	Andy Miller
Lead Officer	Executive Director - Place
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure
Why is this a key decision?	Significant impact on 2 or more wards yes
Wards Affected	Abbey; Oldbury; Smethwick; Tipton Green; Tividale;
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Choose an item.
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	N/A
Appendices (if any)	1. Plan Showing Full Corridor 2. Route Interventions Map

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks 'in principle' approval to the proposed Cross City Bus Package 3 – Dudley to Druids Heath project being promoted by Transport for West Midlands.
- 1.2 The report also seeks approval to delegate authority to the cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure to approve final scheme designs following public consultation and to the appropriation of council-owned land as public highway to facilitate scheme delivery.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Approve in principle the proposed highways modifications within Sandwell that form part of the Cross City Bus Package 3 – Dudley to Druids Heath as shown at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure, to approve final scheme designs at a Decision-Making Session(s) following public consultation carried out by Transport for West Midlands.
- 2.3 Grant in principle approval to appropriate as highway maintainable at public expense any council-owned land that is required to enable the scheme to be delivered, subject to recommendation 2.2 above, and to approval by the Executive Director – Place under existing delegated powers.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 The Dudley to Druids Heath project is a Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) led scheme being delivered using Department for Transport (DfT) funding allocated directly to the West Midlands Combined Authority through the Better deal for Bus Users fund, along with some funding, for the Birmingham sections, allocated by Birmingham City Council. It forms part of a wider programme of cross-city corridor upgrades identified in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- 3.2 In 2020 the government announced funding for WMCA to make bus services faster and more reliable specifically on the Dudley to Druids Heath corridor through Birmingham City Centre, in what was called “A Better Deal for Bus Users”. Since the funding was announced, TfWM, working in partnership with Birmingham City Council, Sandwell, and Dudley Councils, has been developing proposals for the Dudley to Druids Heath corridor (Cross City Package 3) and Birmingham City Centre (Cross City Package 1).
- 3.3 The proposals consist of a series of bus priority interventions along the corridor that will offer passengers improved journey times and a more reliable service for routes including the 50, 82 and 87 services in Birmingham, Sandwell and Dudley. The plan at Appendix A shows the entirety of the corridor.
- 3.4 Routes 82 and 87 both run through Sandwell. The 87 runs from Dudley town centre to the junction at Burnt Tree on the border with Sandwell. From there it runs along the A4033 Tividale Road, the A457 Dudley Road East to Oldbury Ringway. From there the route runs through Oldbury town centre before heading towards Smethwick along the A457 (Birmingham Road/Oldbury Road). In Smethwick the route follows High Street through the Smethwick and

Cape Hill shopping areas before crossing the boundary into Birmingham at Dudley Road just south of the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.

- 3.5 Route 82 runs from Bearwood along Waterloo Road before joining route 87 at Cape Hill.
- 3.6 In Sandwell, the nature of the roads along which the route runs means that opportunities for full bus priority are limited either by road width, or capacity constraints. Therefore, as far as Sandwell is concerned, the project consists of interventions at the following locations;
 - Burnt Tree (A4123/A461) Junction, Tipton
 - A457 Dudley Road/Oldbury Ringway Junction, Oldbury
 - A4092 Cape Hill/Waterloo Road/High Street Junction, Smethwick
- 3.7 As the project in Sandwell comprises a series of junction improvements (described below) each of which can be delivered independently of the others, this report seeks approval to the principal of the overall package, whilst requesting that approval of the final proposals at each location is jointly delegated to the respective cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure at Decision Making Sessions as required.
- 3.8 The proposals at Burnt Tree involve alterations to the traffic signals for the benefit of bus services, cyclists and pedestrians integrating with the two City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) projects along the A4123 and A461 corridors. They are well developed and TfWM carried out public consultation during the autumn of 2024. The outcome of that consultation is currently being considered by TfWM and the detail of the proposals, along with the outcome of the consultation, will be reported to the cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure for final approval in accordance with recommendation 2.2 above, subject to that recommendation's approval. Following final scheme approval, it is anticipated that the works at Burnt Tree scheme will be in a position to move to delivery later this year.
- 3.9 The alterations at the junction of Dudley Road with Oldbury Ringway allow for the provision of a bus lane and segregated cycle lane on the Dudley Road approach to the junction to enable city-bound bus service 87 to bypass queuing traffic, much of which turns right onto the ringway. The bus service turns left along Oldbury Ringway before entering the town centre at Church Street. TfWM intends to consult on these proposals in the Spring. As with the interventions at Burnt Tree, the outcome of the consultation will be considered by TfWM before final approval of the proposals in accordance with recommendation 2.2. Delivery of this intervention could also take place during the current financial year.
- 3.10 The interventions at Burnt Tree and Oldbury involve some carriageway widening. The land required to facilitate this is already in council ownership but is currently not part of the adopted highway. It will therefore be necessary to

appropriate this land as adopted highway once the detailed design is complete and the extent of the land-take is confirmed.

- 3.11 Options for improvements at Cape Hill are still being developed. Sandwell officers are fully engaged with TfWM in this work. Once a preferred option is identified, this will be consulted on before being taken through WMCA approval processes and then be considered by the cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure for approval to proceed to delivery.
- 3.12 Sections of the corridor that cover route 50 (Birmingham city centre to Druids Heath) are already being delivered in Birmingham.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The corridor was chosen by the Department for Transport based on bus patronage levels and thus the number of passengers likely to benefit from improvements to the service. The funding was allocated to TfWM/WMCA on a geographically restricted basis. No alternative routes were offered.
- 4.2 At each of the intervention locations, alternative layouts have been, or will be considered, through the design process with the option providing the most benefits to bus users whilst not disadvantaging other road users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4.3 Full details of the alternative options will be reported to the cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure as part of the approval process for the final scheme designs as per the recommendation at 2.2.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 As the scheme is a TfWM project, consultation is carried out by that organisation and any comments or objections received are dealt with through its approval processes.

As the Burnt tree proposals are at an advanced stage of development, consultation has already taken place. As part of the initial design process a public engagement exercise on new junction proposals was conducted allowing members of the public to have their say. The consultation ran from 16th February to 16th March 2022. Members of the public were able to have their say via:

- Online Survey form on the TfWM website.
- The survey was emailed out to members of the Human Intelligence Teams contact list
- Other feedback e.g. via social media/letters and email, including a press release.

In total there were 108 responses to the engagement and these responses influenced further design development. A second round of public consultation took place during Autumn 2024 and the results will be reported in line with recommendation 2.2 as part of the process for approval of the final design layout in due course.

- 5.2 TfWM will carry out similar consultation on the proposals at Oldbury ringway and Cape Hill as the designs progress and the results will be reported in the same way.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 As the scheme is a TfWM project funded by DfT grant and Birmingham City Council, there are no financial implications for Sandwell.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 The project is being led by TfWM under powers granted to the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of the West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016. WMCA is the Integrated Transport Authority for the West Midlands metropolitan area under powers set out in the Transport Act 2000.
- 7.2 The highway works themselves take place on the West Midlands Key Route Network (KRN). Defining a KRN is a mayoral power under West Midlands Combined Authority Order 2016. The Order provides for WMCA to have concurrent highway powers for the KRN along with the LHA.
- 7.3 As the works take place on highways for which the Council is the LHA, those works require technical approval and sign off by the LHA under powers contained in the Highways Act 1980. The recommendations in this report provide the overarching strategic approval for the scheme within Sandwell against which all further approvals will be considered.

8. Risks

- 8.1 There are no direct risk implications resulting from the course of action outlined in this report. All project risk sits with TfWM as project lead and receiver of grant funding.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken by TfWM as part of the development of the Business Justification Cases for each element of the scheme as they progress towards detailed design. TfWM will keep them under review as the detailed designs progress to ensure there are no concerns that the proposals will affect, or could affect, people with protected characteristics. The Equality Impact Assessment will involve anticipating consequences of

actions on different sections of the community and making sure that any negative consequences are eliminated or minimised and that steps are taken to promote equality of opportunity.

- 9.2 The details of the EIA, along with any recommended actions, will be reported to the cabinet members for Environment & Highways and Regeneration & Infrastructure as part of the approval process for the final scheme designs as per the recommendation at 2.2.

10. Other Relevant Implications

- 10.1 *Procurement implications* – The project involves works in the public highway which require the approval of Sandwell MBC as Local Highway Authority. The delivery strategy is yet to be determined, and it is possible that the works could be commissioned by Sandwell Council through its framework contracts. In the event that this happens, appropriate agreements will need to be entered into under the Highways Act 1980.
- 10.2 *Climate change* – Decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principal theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects within the programme need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases. The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car modes which will reduce carbon outputs from transport.

11. Background Documents

West Midlands Local Transport Plan 4 – Movement for Growth (TfWM, 2016)

West Midlands local Transport Plan 5 (TfWM, 2024)

West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan (TfWM, 2024)

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- 12.1 This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes:
- *Growing up in Sandwell* - The provision of high-quality bus services is vital to many of our young people in accessing schools, further education, and beyond our boundaries, higher education establishments.
 - *Living in Sandwell* – Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities within the borough and beyond its boundaries to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful.

Bus services are a key component of the public transport network. The Bus Service Improvement Plan backed by capital projects to improve bus service reliability, such as the scheme set out in this report, will underpin the provision of a comprehensive and integrated bus network throughout Sandwell.

- *Thriving Economy in Sandwell* - The provision of a high-quality, sustainable public transport network is vital to the borough's business as an enabler of access for their existing workforce and as a means of widening the labour market catchment for future recruitment.

Relevance Check

Budget Reduction/Service Area:

Service Lead

Date:

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service that you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed? No