

Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension

Evidence Given on Behalf of the Applicant: WMCA

Rebuttal to Objection OBJ/25L Mr Weller



Transport and Works Act 1992

The Transport and Works

(Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004

Note in response to letter from Mr Tim Weller

1. A letter has been submitted to the Inquiry by Mr Tim Weller, dated 12 March 2019 [OBJ/25L]. The main points raised by Mr Weller within his letter are addressed below by the WMCA's witnesses; silence on any matter should not be taken as indicating WMCA's agreement; in particular the matters raised in extracts from emails unrelated to the WBHE (e.g. Edinburgh Tram, UKTram, M6 Toll and non-transport funding issues) on pages 3 to 6 of the letter are not responded to.
2. The points raised are dealt with by WMCA's witnesses as follows:

Issues raised in the letter dated 12 March 2019 by Mr Tim Weller (OBJ/25L)	WMCA Witness
Use of railway corridor for National Rail passenger services.	Peter Adams – Scheme Development
Tram services and buses	Peter Adams – Scheme Development
Business Case	Peter Adams – Scheme Development

Introduction

3. This note has been prepared by Mr Peter Adams (Scheme Development witness).

Use of railway corridor for National Rail passenger services.

Mr Weller's Note

4. In a number of paragraphs of his letter Mr Weller states that the former rail corridor proposed to be used for the WBHE should instead be used to provide heavy rail passenger services between Worcester and Derby, acting to relieve rail network congestion in the central Birmingham area, and that the WBHE would preclude such rail use.

The Promoter's Response

5. Network Rail's long-term planning process (LTPP) strategy is undertaken to give passenger and freight train operating companies the confidence to take their own strategic decisions in planning the future of their services and also

fulfils its licence obligations to plan the future capability of the network. The Office of Rail and Road approved the LTPP to inform planning for Control Period 6 (2019-2024) and for the longer term.

6. The LTPP looks at the long-term capability of the network up to 30 years into the future so that Network Rail can promote efficient use of network capability and capacity. The LTPP replaced the previous Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) process, being more flexible and looking further ahead so the industry can develop potential infrastructure interventions and explore important strategic issues.
7. As part of the LTPP strategy, in August 2017, Network Rail published the West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study, a copy of which is included as Appendix 1 to this note.
8. The West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study seeks to identify the capacity and capability that the railway needs to play its part in delivering economic growth by connecting people to jobs, and businesses to markets. The number of passengers using the railway across the study area has increased substantially over the past decade, and further growth is forecast. Strategic options have been identified in order to meet this challenge and set out as choices for funders. These strategic options are in three clear categories:
 1. Meeting passenger demand to 2024
 - providing longer trains across the West Midlands network, and into London Marylebone on the Chiltern route,
 - upgrading passenger facilities at stations to safely manage increasing passenger numbers.
 2. Maximising the opportunities offered by the arrival of High Speed Two (HS2)
 - providing 10 additional train services across the Midlands by unlocking additional capacity in central Birmingham,
 - supporting additional passenger and freight services by providing additional capacity between Birmingham and the East Midlands,
 - providing new passenger journey opportunities through links

into Old Oak Common from the Chiltern route into HS2 and Crossrail,

- maximising the opportunities to interchange on to HS2 services.

3. Developing a longer-term view towards 2043

- better services for passengers on the Chiltern route through the introduction of new rolling stock, electrification and advanced signalling,
- enabling additional trains and improved performance by separating the flows of passenger and freight services at key locations,
- improved provision of information and better train performance through roll out of advanced signalling across the study area.

9. Within this context the West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study notes that strategic options have been developed to form the Midlands Rail Hub. This includes options to provide increased capacity in central Birmingham, for up to 10 additional trains per hour and the capacity to increase the train service between Birmingham and the East Midlands. This package also includes strategic options that provide increased capacity for freight growth, including improved access to important freight terminals.
10. The West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study does not recommend the use of the Stourbridge to Walsall corridor for passenger services. It does consider whether the corridor could be utilised for freight services, and these considerations are summarised in Option Table 13 on page 74. The conclusion of these considerations is noted as “This option has not been prioritised as the forecast growth in traffic is not expected be routed via this corridor” and the estimated cost of reopening or upgrade of the disused or abandoned lines to provide a two-track route for freight services is noted as £375 million to £875 million. However, as noted in the Proof of Evidence of my colleague Mr Ian Collins [APP/P3.1] at section 6.14, the WBHE will provide passive provision for future conversion of the tramway to a shared tram and heavy freight corridor. It is therefore incorrect to state that the WBHE would preclude such rail freight

use

11. To summarise, Network Rail has considered and identified realistic proposals to provide additional long-term rail capacity in central Birmingham within its West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study; these do not include any proposals for the WBHE corridor as suggested by Mr Weller. This is confirmed by the letter dated 4 July 2018 from Network Rail (attached as Appendix 2 to this note), which notes that both Network Rail and the Department for Transport support the transfer of the corridor between Round Oak and Wednesbury to WMCA,
12. As part of the Final Business Case process, WMCA produced an Option Review Update, which is included as Appendix 3. This report provides a summary of the options assessment process undertaken in the development of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension (WBHE) and updates these in line with DfT Guidance, as set out in section 1 of the report.
13. This re-considered the considerable previous work on the WBHE corridor, which included heavy rail passenger train solutions for the corridor and concluded at paragraph 4.9 and 10 that:-

“The previous studies showed the following:-

Tram options provide the quickest journey times between key centres and as such achieve the greatest patronage. Those options that connect directly to Metro Line 1 also provide a direct link to Birmingham and Wolverhampton resulting in higher levels of patronage and subsequent benefits compared to shuttle options that only connect the local towns within the corridor and require interchange to access other areas.

The best performing Tram option served Dudley Town Centre, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Metro Line 1.

The BRT option also achieves considerable journey time savings due to the segregated nature however the savings are not as great as for the Tram based options. The level of segregation also means that the capital costs are only slightly lower than the Tram option. Another key constraint is the lack of compatibility between heavy rail and BRT

which means it would not be acceptable to the landowner Network Rail.

The bus options have the advantage of connecting all the key centres, however, they were shown to have the slowest journey times thereby generating few benefits. In addition, patronage levels were generally lower than the Tram for the equivalent route option.

The heavy rail options achieve the lowest BCRs as they are confined to the rail corridor and do not penetrate the important local centres of Dudley, Brierley Hill and Merry Hill. Furthermore, the revenue associated with the rail options did not cover the predicted operating costs and therefore they would have to be subsidised.

None of the information outlined above that has become available subsequent to the OBC review indicates that the previous option assessments would change if the work was revisited. Therefore, this review concludes that It remains clear that the configuration of rapid transit in the corridor as an extension to the current West Midlands Metro offers the best way of connecting Brierley Hill, Dudley town centre and Wednesbury to Birmingham and Wolverhampton via the existing Metro route. In doing so, the extension will support the policy aims of WMCA and BCLEP relating to transport in the Black Country, and the meet the scheme objectives as set out in Final Business Case.”

Tram services and buses

Mr Weller’s Note

14. In a number of paragraphs of his letter Mr Weller states that the WBHE as a “shuttle tram” would “duplicate/replace buses as in Broad Street, Birmingham”.

The Promoter’s Response

15. The WBHE is not a “shuttle tram”, which I take to mean one not providing direct services to the key centres of Birmingham and Wolverhampton, but shuttling between Brierley Hill and Wednesbury; rather, the services will be through services to these key centres of growth and employment providing significant new journey opportunities to residents served by the up to 17 stops along the

WBHE.

16. The WBHE does not “duplicate/replace buses”. As demonstrated by Table 7.1 in my main Proof of Evidence [APP/P1.1], journeys by tram would broadly halve journey times by public transport to central Birmingham from along the route, providing a dramatic step-change in accessibility to jobs and services for those without access to a car.
17. Mr Weller is incorrect in stating that trams will permanently displace buses from Broad Street in Birmingham; the plans for the Centenary Square and Edgbaston extensions provide for trams, buses and taxis to share Broad Street upon completion of the tram works. The current diversions are temporary during construction of the tramway.

Business Case

Mr Weller’s Note

18. Mr Weller casts doubt on the validity of the business case for the WBHE.

The Promoter’s Response

19. Mr David Carter demonstrates in his Main and Supplementary Proofs of Evidence [APP/P2.1 and App/P2.4] that there is a sound business case for the WBHE, determined in accordance with the relevant Government guidance. This has been accepted by the Government via its allocation of significant funding to the project.
20. It can be noted from Appendix 3 that previous studies have conclusively shown that passenger rail solutions compare poorly with the WBHE. They achieve the lowest economic performance as they are confined to the rail corridor and do not penetrate the important local centres of Dudley, Brierley Hill and Merry Hill. Furthermore, the revenue associated with the rail options did not cover the predicted operating costs and therefore they would have to be subsidised, which would be viewed unfavourably by funders.

List of Appendices

Paragraph Ref	Appendix	Description
7	1	West Midlands and Chiltern Route Study August 2017
11	2	Network Rail letter dated 4 July 2018
12	3	WMCA Final Business Case Option Review Update