**Public Consultation on the Warwickshire County Council Passenger Rail Strategy 2019 - 2034**

27th July 2019 – 20th September 2019

**Public Consultation on the Warwickshire County Council Passenger Rail Strategy 2019 - 2034**

**What is this consultation about?**

Rail services in Warwickshire make a significant contribution to the local economy, business and local communities, helping to make Warwickshire an attractive place in which to live and work. The County Council has an excellent track record in delivering rail infrastructure and helping to improve services.

Warwickshire intends to continue this support and investment in the local rail network to help improve wider connectivity, contribute to the delivery of housing and employment opportunities and maximise the benefit of economic growth in Warwickshire over the next fifteen years and beyond. This strategy sets out Warwickshire County Council’s ambitious and challenging plans to improve the rail offer in Warwickshire

Anyone who is interested in local transport and the local rail offer can comment on the draft strategy. Responses are invited from a range of partners, stakeholders and people who live or work in Warwickshire.

The consultation will help inform and shape the final Warwickshire Rail Strategy and if approved by Warwickshire County Council’s Cabinet, will replace the existing rail strategy from early 2020.

**The consultation will run from 27th July to 20th September 2020.**

**Why is Warwickshire County Council consulting?**

The new Rail Strategy 2019-2034 will be a successor to the existing rail strategy, as contained in the Local Transport Plan 3. WCC want to ensure that the strategy reflects the wider needs and aspirations of our communities and stakeholders where possible.

**Challenges and wider context**

Warwickshire has an excellent track record in delivering improvements to the rail network, from new station delivery to smaller, local improvements. The County Council is keen to build on these successes but given the scale of some of our ambitions we will need to work closely with our key partners, including Midlands Connect, West Midlands Rail Executive, Network Rail and the relevant Train Operating Companies in order to achieve the aspirations set out in the strategy.

Locally, Warwickshire is a growing County with a population of approximately 550,000 people, however up to 160,000 new homes are committed in Local Plans across Warwickshire – the equivalent of a new town. This growth will place additional pressure on the existing rail services and infrastructure (e.g. access to stations) and present new connectivity opportunities.

Despite the challenging nature of delivering rail service, connectivity and capacity improvements, there are number of opportunities that Warwickshire will seek to maximise in order to help secure infrastructure, service and capacity improvements.

**Key elements of the Strategy**

The draft rail strategy has been developed to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits of the rail network to Warwickshire’s residents and businesses.

Four key overarching objectives have been identified to support the delivery of Warwickshire’s Rail Strategy and policies have been developed to support the delivery of these objectives:

1. Maximise economic, social and environmental benefits of the rail network to Warwickshire residents and businesses;

2. Maximise opportunities for journeys within Warwickshire (and beyond) to be undertaken by rail, particularly for commuting purposes;

3. Maximise opportunities for travel demands of new developments to be met by rail;

4. Support opportunities to transfer freight from road to rail.

**How will we deliver the strategy?**

Delivering significant improvements to the rail network can often prove complex and it is clear that major infrastructure projects such as increasing capacity between the Thames Valley and the Midlands will not be delivered at a local level and therefore the County Council will fully engage with a variety of partners and stakeholders in order to realise these ambitions.

**Resourcing our vision**

Whilst specific funding is not available to enable the delivery of the Rail Strategy, opportunities to fund specific improvements will be sought as appropriate, for example, via the Department for Transport’s New Station Fund. The County Council will work with Partners, such as Midlands Connect to help secure funding for regionally significant interventions e.g capacity upgrades.

The draft strategy is available in full online at [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask)

**Supporting Information**

The following documents are available on *www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask*

* Warwickshire County Council Draft Rail Strategy 2019-2034
* Draft Equality Impact Assessment
* Frequently Asked Questions
* Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 3
* West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy, which is available at http://www.westmidlandsrail.com/strategy/wmris/

**How can I take part in the consultation?**

The main way to respond to the consultation is via an online questionnaire that can be accessed from Warwickshire County Council’s online consultation hub [*www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask*](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask)*.*

The questionnaire is anonymous and does not ask for any personal information.

If you require a paper copy of the questionnaire or an alternative format please contact us by phone or email (see below for contact details).

If you would like to respond to this consultation in writing you can do this by emailing tpu@warwickshire.gov.uk or sending your written response to Warwickshire County Council, Communities Group, Barrack Street, Warwick, CV34 4TH .

**Privacy Statement.**

The questionnaire is anonymous and does not ask for any personal information.

Information you provide in any additional correspondence to the survey, including personal information, may be disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, including your contact details, please tell us why, but be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act, Warwickshire County Council cannot always guarantee confidentiality.

**Contact Details**

For further information on this consultation please contact:

Email: tpu@warwickshire.gov.uk

Tel:    01926 412773

**Closing date**

The consultation will close at 12 noon on 20th September 2019

**What will happen after the consultation?**

Following the consultation period all responses will be considered and where feasible and appropriate the draft Rail Strategy will be updated to reflect these responses.

A consultation report and the final strategy will be taken to the County Council’s Cabinet for consideration and approval. Full Council will then be asked to endorse the Strategy and it will then take effect as a non-statutory supplement to the Local Transport Plan 3. This is anticipated to happen in December 2019.