

Midland Metro

2.5 Route Description

2.5.1 Introduction

The proposed scheme runs for approximately 11 km from the existing Line 1 at Wednesbury to Great Bridge, Horseley Heath, Dudley Port, Dudley town centre, the Waterfront and Merry Hill, before terminating at Brierley Hill town centre. The proposed alignment is illustrated in [Figure 2.1](#).

The scheme runs predominantly on a mothballed heavy rail corridor but also runs through development land and on existing highway. The scheme has been designed so as not to preclude the reopening of the mothballed heavy rail corridor and could, therefore, share the rail corridor/formation ⁽²²⁾ with future freight services.

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) West Midlands Strategy proposes the reopening of the heavy rail route from Round Oak to Bescot as part of a freight-only through route. The proposal advances relevant parts of the West Midlands Freight Route Study. The preferred option is for two through freight paths per hour in each direction, in addition to local trips from Round Oak to Bescot. The scheme would require the reinstatement of the previous loading gauge and a suitable track layout and signalling system.

The track arrangement differs from that proposed in the Midland Metro proposals and would not involve track sharing with Midland Metro. A study to examine the implications of the reopened route is underway, which will assess design and construction issues, delivery, costs and the option of integration with the Midland Metro proposals.

Where the existing rail corridor is utilised, the majority of the proposed alignment is comprised of two tracks for Midland Metro and one track for heavy rail. However, from Wednesbury to Great Bridge the width of the existing rail corridor allows for the allocation of four rail tracks (ie two tracks for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme and two tracks for any future heavy rail line). In two areas, however, the corridor width only allows for a single Midland Metro track and single heavy rail track. This occurs where the alignment passes under the West Coast Main Line/Birmingham Canal at Dudley Port and along the Parkhead Viaduct. In addition, it will be necessary in some locations to widen the existing mothballed railway formation, as described below, to accommodate the light rail and the heavy rail alignment. Similarly, where the alignment passes under or over an existing bridge structure, works may be required to ensure that that structure is sufficient to accommodate both the heavy rail alignment and the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme.

It will be necessary to widen the existing railway formation in a number of areas. Where this is on an embankment, new retaining walls will be constructed within the railway corridor. Where the alignment is located within a cutting, retaining structures using gabions ⁽²³⁾ will be constructed. A full description of the works required to construct the scheme is provided below in [Section 2.7 Construction](#).

In accordance with the requirements of Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI) a security fence will be erected to separate the Midland Metro alignment and tram tracks from the heavy rail alignment. In addition, measures will be put in place at tram stops to deter pedestrians from gaining access to the heavy rail alignment.

However, the reintroduction of any future heavy rail services does form part of the proposed Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme, and is therefore not assessed in this ES.

A detailed description of the scheme is provided below. To facilitate this, the proposed route has been divided into four main sections, comprising:

- Existing Rail Corridor – Wednesbury to Tipton Road;
- Dudley Town Centre – Tipton Road to Blowers Green Road;
- Existing Rail Corridor – Blowers Green Road to Pensnett Canal; and
- Merry Hill – Pensnett Canal to Brierley Hill.

Where practicable, potential environmental impacts are also described by route sections. The location of stops and park and ride sites is described in [Sections 2.6.4](#) and [2.6.5](#).

2.5.2 Existing Rail Corridor – Wednesbury to Tipton Road

This section of the scheme is located within the existing, mothballed rail corridor. The proposed alignment leaves Midland Metro Line 1 at the existing depot at Wednesbury and follows the mothballed South Staffordshire railway line south west towards Dudley (see [Plate 2.1](#)).

A new viaduct will be required to carry the proposed extension from Line 1 down to the level of existing railway corridor and over the depot access road. In this location the corridor is sufficient for four tracks along the first segment of the section, including two for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme and two tracks for any future heavy rail. For the remainder of this section, except for a short section at Dudley Port, the formation is sufficient for two tracks for Midland Metro and one track for heavy rail. However, it will be necessary to widen the railway formation in some areas.

The alignment crosses the River Tame and the Tame Valley Canal, and the Ocker Hill Balancing Ponds (see [Plates 2.2](#) and [2.3](#)) are located adjacent to the alignment in this area. Works will be required to extend the exiting River Tame and Tame Valley Canal underbridges as part of the proposed scheme, including replacement of the existing bridge decks. The Smith Road underbridge will be demolished.

Where the formation is on embankment, new retaining walls will be required, to a maximum height of around 3.5 m in the Ocker Hill area, to 1.5 to 2.5 m in height in the Gold's Hill area.

A provisional tram stop is located adjacent to the Tame Valley Canal at Gold's Hill crossing and is included in the Regeneration Zone established through Advantage West Midlands (see [Section 2.6.4](#)). The construction of this stop will be dependent on developer contributions, although the powers to build it will be included in the TW Order. The majority of the surrounding land has an industrial past and its development forms part of SMBC's aspirations to regenerate the area. The detailed location of the stop will be subject to a condition of any outline planning consent for the development.

In the event that a stop is provided, complementary measures to improve pedestrian access to the stop via Shaw Street will be carried out. This will

include the re-surfacing of the existing footpath, in addition to the provision of lighting, CCTV and landscaping. An at-grade ⁽²⁴⁾ crossing of the alignment will be provided in any event to serve the public footpath that crosses the tracks in this area. A pedestrian footbridge accessed by ramps and stairs will be constructed to cross the alignment in the event that heavy rail services operate on this corridor in the future. However, in the absence of the heavy rail scheme the crossing of the Midland Metro scheme will remain at ground level.

The alignment then runs parallel to the River Tame, before crossing under Black Country New Road, over the Walsall Canal and under New Road (see *Plates 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6*). Disused underpasses in this area will be stopped-up, demolished as necessary and infilled. The existing at-grade crossing located on Eagle Lane beneath Black Country New Road will remain. However, a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists will be installed should heavy rail services be reinstated on this line.

The proposed Great Bridge stop, which is accessed via lifts and stairs to New Road, is located to the east of New Road. The existing pedestrian crossing and bus stops on New Road will also be relocated to give better access to the stop. Works will be required in this area to replace the bridge deck at the Walsall Canal underbridge and to reconstruct the New Road overbridge. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

South west of New Road the alignment is located in a cutting. Where this is widened, new retaining structures using gabions will be constructed, to a maximum height of around 2.5 m.

Further west, the route crosses under Horseley Road, necessitating reconstruction of the overbridge (see *Plate 2.7*). The Horseley Road stop is located west of the Horseley Road crossing, serving the Horseley Heath residential area, including new residential properties to the north west of the alignment. The main access to the stop will be via lifts and stairs from Horseley Road. An existing pedestrian walkway to Horseley Heath will be improved as part of the scheme, to provide a secondary access to the south. This will include re-surfacing, lighting and CCTV. This secondary access will utilise stairs, but lifts will not be provided. The existing walkway overbridge in this area will also be re-constructed to form a pedestrian footbridge. This stop will also be served by a park and ride site, accessed from Horseley Road. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop and at the proposed park and ride site, situated between Horseley Road and Railway Street to the south east of the alignment. Gabion walls to a height of around 1.5 m will be required in this area.

The alignment then crosses under Lower Church Lane and Park Lane East via two reconstructed overbridges (see *Plates 2.8 and 2.9*), and via a single track under the West Coast Main Line and Birmingham Canal aqueduct (see *Plates 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12*). An existing footbridge will be demolished, the footpath stopped up, and a new improved footbridge provided east of the West Coast Main Line and adjacent to the proposed Dudley Port tram stop. This stop will be served by a park and ride site located to the north west of the alignment, accessed via Park Lane East. This will provide interchange with West Coast Main Line train services and bus services on Horseley Heath Road.

The Dudley Port stop will be accessed via lifts and stairs to Park Lane East. An existing footbridge will be demolished and the footpath stopped up, to be replaced by a pedestrian footbridge and footpath as part of the proposed scheme. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop and at the park and ride site.

The alignment then continues west, crossing over Coneygre Road via an existing underbridge (see *Plate 2.13*), and over Sedgley Road on a reconstructed underbridge. Sedgley Road East tram stop is located in this area, adjacent to the junction between Sedgley Road East and Mayfair Gardens. This stop will serve residential properties on Binfield Street, Mayfair Gardens, Coneygre Road and Tudor Court, in addition to Coneygre Leisure Centre and playing fields (see *Plate 2.14*).

Lifts and stairs will provide access to the stop from Sedgley Road East and ramp access to Binfield Street will be provided. Improvements will also be made to an existing pedestrian walkway to Mayfair Gardens and a pedestrian crossing will be provided on Mayfair Gardens adjacent to the walkway, by SMBC. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop. Retaining walls will be required adjacent to the stop, to a maximum height of around 2.5 m.

An existing subway structure east of Birmingham Canal will be demolished and infilled as part of the scheme. The alignment crosses Birmingham Canal via an existing underbridge, although it will be necessary to replace and extend the bridge deck. Retaining walls to a height of around 2.5 m will be required in this area.

A tram stop is located north east of Birmingham New Road (see *Plate 2.15*). The stop will be accessed via lifts and stairs from Birmingham New Road, which include a new signal-controlled pedestrian crossing. As part of the scheme, an existing pedestrian link to Madin Road will be improved, including widening, re-surfacing, lighting and CCTV. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop, and retaining walls to a height of around 2.5 m will be required. The alignment then crosses Birmingham New Road via an existing underbridge, although the deck will be replaced and extended as part of the scheme. Adjacent to the Guest Hospital site, existing piers and abutments will be demolished.

2.5.3 Dudley Town Centre – Tipton Road to Blowers Green Road

This section of the alignment is generally located at grade within the public highway boundary through Dudley town centre.

The alignment leaves the railway corridor on an embankment at Tipton Road (see *Plates 2.16 and 2.17*). Tipton Road stop is located north east of the Tipton Road crossing and will be at the same level as Tipton Road. A signal-controlled pedestrian crossing will be provided on Tipton Road to access the stop. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop. This stop will serve the mixed-use developments at Castle Gate and at the former Freightliner and Guest Hospital sites. Retaining walls to a maximum height of 3 m will be constructed to support the embankment.

The scheme crosses Tipton Road via a signal-controlled at-grade junction, and continues on an embankment through the site of the former Dudley Freightliner Depot, joining Castle Hill at the junction with Station Drive and Trindle Road. A provisional tram stop is located adjacent to Station Drive for which powers will be sought as part of the TW Order. Financial contributions will be required from the developer of the proposed mixed-use development on the former Freightliner site, to cover the capital cost of stop construction. The detailed location of the stop will be subject to a condition of any outline planning consent for the development. The stop will be accessed via a pedestrian walkway to Station Drive. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

The alignment then follows Castle Hill at grade and within the central reservation of the highway, before turning south onto Birmingham Street (North). It will be necessary to modify the highway at Castle Hill to accommodate the scheme. In addition, access from Birmingham Street (North)

to Castle Hill will be signal-controlled, incorporating a pedestrian crossing. Birmingham Street (North) will be remodelled to accommodate the scheme. Bourne Street will become one-way from Birmingham Street (North) to a location adjacent to numbers 19 and 21 Bourne Street and a turning head provided. The remainder of Bourne Street will be two-way, and the existing restriction on access to Trindle Road removed.

The route then continues east to join a remodelled Bus Station on Porters Field and Fisher Street (see [Plates 2.18 and 2.19](#)). This will require the construction of retaining walls to a maximum height of 1 m where the alignment joins the bus station. A tram stop will be incorporated into the remodelled Dudley Bus Station to provide interchange with local bus services. Although the powers to construct the stop are included in the TW Order, powers to re-model the bus station do not form part of the proposed scheme and these works are not assessed as part of this EIA. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

From this location the scheme joins Birmingham Street (South) and proceeds onto King Street via a signal controlled access (see [Plates 2.20 and 2.21](#)). Traffic management measures will be implemented on King Street to accommodate the scheme. This will include signal-controlled entry onto King Street and incorporating a pedestrian crossing. The existing pedestrian footbridge at the junction with Flood Street will be demolished.

The alignment continues south, on Flood Street, which will be realigned to the east. A means of access from King Street to properties on Flood Street will be constructed as part of the scheme. A provisional tram stop is also located in this area. Although this stop will form part of the TW Order application, financial contributions will be required from the developer of a proposed food store and residential development in this area, to cover the capital cost of stop construction. The detailed location of the stop will be subject to a condition of any outline planning consent for the development. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

The alignment then crosses New Mill Street via an at-grade crossing, incorporating pedestrian crossing facilities. It will be necessary to realign New Mill Street in this area to the east of the scheme alignment.

Further south the route runs parallel with the Dudley Southern Bypass along an existing purpose built corridor, with a stop located east of New Road (see [Plate 2.22](#)). This stop is located adjacent to Dudley Southern Bypass, north east of the New Road crossing. The stop will be accessed from New Road via lifts and stairs and served by a park and ride site, also accessed via New Road. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

The scheme is located to the north eastern carriageway of the bypass and a park and ride site, which is also forms part of the scheme, is located to the north west adjacent to New Road.

Adjacent to Shaw Road the scheme leaves the Dudley Southern Bypass on an earth embankment, and crosses under Blowers Green Road utilising existing overbridges before rejoining the existing rail corridor (see [Plate 2.23](#)). A tram stop is located at Cinder Bank east of Blowers Green Road. The stop will be accessed via Shaw Street and Blowers Green Road by stairs and lifts and a pedestrian footbridge. A park and ride site will also be provided, although this is located on the opposite side of Blowers Green Road to the stop. However, a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing on Blowers Green Road is to be provided by Dudley MBC to allow pedestrians to cross the road safely. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

2.5.4 Existing Rail Corridor – Blowers Green Road to Pensnett Canal

After rejoining the existing mothballed rail corridor, the scheme continues west adjacent to Thornleigh Trading Estate where it rises onto an existing embankment before crossing the existing Parkhead Viaduct over Dudley Canal and Parkhead Locks (see [Plate 2.24](#)). In this area there is provision for a single track for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme and single track for heavy rail only. The works will necessitate the construction of a retaining wall, to a height of around 4 m, and a widening of the embankment in this area, in addition to substantial works to rebuild part of the viaduct.

The alignment then continues south west adjacent to Peartree Industrial Estate, before crossing under Pedmore Road where the alignment is in cutting (see [Plate 2.25](#)). A tram stop is located to the east of the Pedmore Road crossing and serves the surrounding residential areas on Buxton Road, Wood Street and Cochrane Road, in addition to industrial properties to the east of the alignment. Lifts and stairs will be provided in addition to a pedestrian footbridge to access the stop from Pedmore Road and Buxton Road. The access from Buxton Road will also be upgraded. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

The alignment then continues south west crossing the Pensnett Canal. A new underbridge will be constructed in this area, in addition to works required to extend or replace the deck on the existing Pensnett Canal underbridge, to be implemented only upon the reinstatement of heavy rail services (see [Plate 2.26](#)). Provision will also be made for a heavy rail platform in this area, although this will not be constructed as part of the scheme and is not included in the TW Order application. A provisional tram stop, for which powers will be sought as part of the TW Order, is located south west of the Pensnett Canal crossing, adjacent to Canal Street. Financial contributions will be required from the developer of the proposed mixed-use development and car parking site which forms part of the adjacent Harts Hill Regeneration and Development Area, to cover the capital cost of stop construction. The detailed location of the stop will be subject to a condition of any outline planning consent for the development. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

2.5.5 Merry Hill – Pensnett Canal to Brierley Hill

The scheme then crosses Canal Street where it leaves the existing rail corridor for the final time. Replacement or extension of the existing Canal Street underbridge deck will be required to accommodate the works, in addition to the construction of a new Canal Street underbridge. The route then turns east on an embankment, through the former Hill and Smith site east of Round Oak Rail before crossing the Dudley Canal on a new bridge structure. A signal-controlled at grade crossing will be provided to access the proposed third-party parking site if required.

This route will require an existing vacant engineering property east of the canal, known as the Victoria Works, to be demolished. The route then turns west and continues adjacent to Waterfront Way before turning south between the Waterfront development and the car park that serves the site. A signal controlled at-grade crossing will be provided on the access to the Round Oak Rail/Norish premises and at the junction with Waterfront Way. Waterfront Way will also be realigned as part of the scheme. A tram stop is located adjacent to the main entrance to the Waterfront development. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop. The stop will serve a new office development consisting of over 11,000 m² office floorspace and café areas.

The alignment then continues south, parallel with the realigned Waterfront Way on an embankment (see [Plate 2.27](#)). Retaining walls to a maximum height of around 1.5 m will be required to support the embankment. A signalled at-grade crossing will be provided on Waterfront Way.

The route then leaves Waterfront Way on an embankment, crossing Level Street roundabout at grade via signal controlled crossings (see [Plates](#)

[2.28 and 2.29](#)). The alignment then continues south west between The Embankment and Dudley Canal, to the north west of the Merry Hill Centre (see [Plate 2.30](#)). A tram stop is located in this area adjacent to the canal and there is a proposed third party bridge to be integrated within the stop to provide additional access (see [Plate 2.31](#)). This will necessitate the construction of a retaining wall on the south eastern side of the alignment, to a maximum height of 12 m, and the remodelling of The Embankment, which will become one way. The stop will be located on an embankment adjacent to Dudley Canal. Lifts and stairs will provide access to the Merry Hill Centre, which is located at a lower level than the stop. Complementary landscaping works will be provided adjacent to the stop.

The route continues on a retained embankment at a height of around 5 m, before crossing the Dudley Canal via a new bridge structure. The alignment then turns west before crossing the Leisure Centre access road, which will be stopped up on the southern side of the scheme. A new access road to the Leisure Centre will be constructed as part of the scheme. The terminus stop at Brierley Hill is located on Cottage Street. This stop will serve the existing leisure centre and Asda food store in addition to Brierley Hill town centre.

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