

Midland Metro

4.3

National Planning Policy

4.3.1 Introduction

Current national planning policy of relevance to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme covers:

- general principles of development;
- town centres and retail development;
- nature conservation;
- transport;
- the historic environment; and
- archaeology.

The relevance of these issues in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme is discussed in the following sections.

4.3.2 Regional White Paper – Your Region, Your Choice, Revitalising the English Regions, Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), May 2002

This White Paper sets out the Government's commitment to creating decentralised power to the UK regions. Under the section on Transport, the White Paper states that good transport is essential for sustainable economic success, a better environment and an enhanced quality of life. Improving public transport is also viewed as being vital in reducing social exclusion. To improve transport, it needs to be integrated with policy on economic development, planning and housing.

Elected regional assemblies will be responsible for a regional transport strategy and will produce plans to address congestion, improve public transport and road links and ensure that the transport system supports sustainable economic growth.

4.3.3 Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), July 2000

The strategy contained in the 10 Year Plan comprises a three-tiered approach, based on looking at transport as a whole, encouraging closer working between the government and the private sector to boost investment and modernising the transport network in ways that make it bigger, safer, cleaner and quicker. The vision is that by 2010 there will be more light rail systems that are fully accessible and integrated with other types of transport (para 1.4). In addition, the vision includes the need for high quality park and ride schemes, which cut down on the need for people to drive into congested town centres (para 1.4).

A key strand of the strategy is the promotion of, and investment in, light rail schemes. *"Light rail, trams and other rapid transit systems can play a significant part in improving the attractiveness and quality of public transport in major conurbations"* (para 6.43). The level of investment outlined in the 10 Year Plan is capable of delivering 25 new light rail lines in major cities and conurbations around the country and one of the main targets is to at least double light rail passenger journeys by 2010.

Park and ride schemes can be linked into light rail services and they are *"increasingly used as a way of relieving traffic pressures whilst maintaining accessibility to town and city centres"* (para 6.43). Park and ride sites can be used particularly effectively when located at key transport interchanges such as major road and rail interchanges.

4.3.4 Transport White Paper - A New Deal for Transport - Better for Everyone, DETR, July 1998

The White Paper sets out the Government's commitment to creating a better, more integrated transport system to tackle the problems of congestion and pollution. The White Paper defines integration as being:

- within and between different types of transport - so that people can move easily between them;
- with the environment - supporting a better environment;
- with land use planning – with local, regional and national levels working together to support more sustainable travel choices and reducing the need to travel; and
- with policies on education, health and wealth creation – with transport enabling a more inclusive society.

Central to the White Paper are a number of measures designed to promote integrated transport. Of relevance to the proposed scheme are:

- providing greater transport choices for people through, for example, the promotion of light rail schemes and park and ride;
- developing a more integrated public transport system - improving the quality and reliability of public transport journeys as a better option for travel; and
- bringing streets back to people – giving priority to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.

In paragraph 3.37, the White Paper recognises the role rapid transit systems can play in delivering integrated transport in urban areas. However, schemes will only be supported if they represent “*good value for money and form an integral and necessary part of a strategy in a local transport plan*” (para 3.38). The White Paper also places significant emphasis on improving transport interchanges as a method of interconnecting different modes of transport whilst ensuring safety and shelter. The Paper states that “*quick and easy interchange is essential for public transport to compete with the convenience of car use*” (para 3.65).

4.3.5 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 1 – General Policies and Principles, February 1997

PPG 1 underlines the importance of the plan-led system and states that any development proposals will be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan where it contains relevant policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3.6 PPG 6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, June 1996

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme serves the town centres of Great Bridge, Dudley, Merry Hill and Brierley Hill. The Government’s policy objectives, as set out in PPG6, are directed at sustaining and enhancing the viability of town centres, and promoting easy and convenient access, through a choice of means of transport. The ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including the frequency and quality of public transport, is a key indicator as to the health of a town centre. PPG6 stresses the importance of accessibility in town centre strategies, re-iterating that the key issues include the promotion of improvements “*in the quality and convenience of less environmentally harmful means of transport so that they provide a realistic alternative to the car*” (para 2.28).

4.3.7 PPG 9 - Nature Conservation, October 1994

The Wednesbury to Brierley Hill alignment crosses, or is located adjacent to, a number of sites which are designated for their nature conservation interest, including Wildlife Corridors, Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. A description of each of these sites is provided in *Section 6.7*.

Specifically in relation to development proposals, PPG 9 identifies nature conservation as a significant material consideration, but states that local planning authorities “*should not refuse permission if development can be subject to conditions that will prevent damaging impacts on wildlife habitats or important physical features, or if other material factors are sufficient to override nature conservation issues*” (para 27).

4.3.8 PPG 13 – Transport, March 2001

The guidance focuses on the Government’s integrated transport strategy. The main objectives of the guidance are to:

- promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
- promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- reduce the need to travel, especially by car (para 4).

The guidance sets out a number of considerations that local authorities need to take account of in development plan policy and when determining planning applications. These include the use of planning and transport measures to promote sustainable transport choices, to reduce the reliance on the car for work and other journeys, and to provide more road space to public transport in town centres, local neighbourhoods and other areas.

PPG 13 recognises that the availability and use of public transport is an important ingredient in determining policies to reduce the need for travel by car and that quick, easy and safe interchange is essential for integration between modes of travel. Park and ride schemes, in appropriate circumstances, can help to promote sustainable travel patterns and can help to facilitate quick and easy interchange to public transport modes, including

light rail.

4.3.9 PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment, September 1994

The scheme passes through, or close to, a number of areas of archaeological interest, including sites designated locally as Sites of Potential for Archaeological Importance and Sites of Special Architectural Interest, in addition to a range of listed buildings and conservation areas.

A full description of the archaeological and cultural environment associated with the scheme is provided in *Section 6.8*.

PPG 15 provides comprehensive advice on conservation areas, listed buildings and the historic environment. Section 69 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines conservation areas as “*areas of special architectural or historical interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. The effect of a development on a listed building should include the consideration of its setting, which may often include land some distance from it.

The guidance reinforces the requirement that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and should form a material consideration in the handling of development proposals, even those which are outside of the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area. The guidance recognises that many conservation areas fall within the commercial heart of towns and cities and whilst preservation or enhancement is a major consideration “*this cannot realistically take the form of preventing all new development*” (para 4.16).

4.3.10 PPG 16 – Archaeology and Planning, November 1990

In the area of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill scheme, sites range in date and type from prehistoric flint scatters (eg pieces of prehistoric tools scattered in fields) to medieval settlements, historic parkland, water mills and the many sites and structures of the Industrial Revolution. A full description is provided in *Section 6.8*, which covers *Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*.

The guidance states that “*where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation*” (para 8). *Paragraph 6* of the guidance points to the importance of archaeological remains as a “*finite and non-renewable resource*” and that remains must be managed in a way that ensures that they are not needlessly or carelessly destroyed. However, it does state that each case for preservation of remains must be assessed on its merits and other development plan policies should be considered, against the importance of the proposed development (para 27).

4.3.11 PPG24 – Planning and Noise, September 1994

The proposed scheme is located within the vicinity of properties that are sensitive to noise, including for example, residential properties, Dudley Central Mosque and the Buddhist Temple in Brierley Hill.

PPG24 establishes Noise Exposure Categories (NECs) that are applicable when planning new residential developments affected by transport noise or by mixed noise sources. These categories are intended to provide guidance on the levels of acceptable noise for new housing developments that should be taken into account when determining planning permission. The NECs are not intended for use in reverse, ie for assessing noise impacts of new noise sources on existing housing, but can be useful when considering absolute criterion for noise impacts. As a result, this guidance has been taken into account in the assessment of noise effects resulting from the proposed scheme. Further information is provided in *Section 6.4* and in [Appendix E](#).

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