

Supplementary Note to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Examination 2025 – Matter 6 (Action 6.3)

This note has been produced by South Staffordshire Council to supplement the Examination of the South Staffordshire Local Plan. It directly responds to Action 6.3 regarding analysis of public transport options.

Action 6.3 - Council to identify and provide additional analysis of the different public transport options available to serve the different settlements in each of the tiers in the settlement hierarchy.

Introduction

Public transport accessibility information initially provided by Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has been utilised for assessing *Criteria C: Access to employment locations* in the Rural Services and Facilities Audit (RSFA) 2021 - see paragraphs 3.18-3.21. Accessibility mapping was also provided by SCC for assessing *Criteria E: Public transport access to higher order services outside of the villages* (excluding access to employment) - see paragraphs 3.27-3.30 of RSFA 2021. Further information on the methods used for compiling this accessibility mapping are set out in Appendix 1.

Additional information on public transport service provision has now been provided by SCC for this note, showing train and bus service provision for each of the district's Tier 1-5 settlements, as well as detailing where services are subsidised. This information reflects the position at June 2025.

There are only four railway stations in the district. These are located at Codsall (within walking distance for Codsall and Bilbrook residents), Bilbrook (within walking distance for Codsall and Bilbrook residents), Landywood (within walking distance for Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay residents) and Penkridge (within walking distance for Penkridge residents only).

There are numerous bus services operating in the district; however, given the lack of any towns and the rural nature of the district, the majority of bus services focus on linking to towns and cities in neighbouring urban areas, rather than between settlements within the district. A map showing the various bus routes in the district (at June 2024) is set out in SCC's [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) 2024-2050](#) (see Figure 4).

Recent national research¹ has demonstrated that bus services have seen sharp declines in recent years, with strong geographic disparities, and with rural services dropping by 52% since 2008. The same research indicated that service frequency has reduced in South Staffordshire by almost 58% between 2010-2023.

Tier 1 settlements – public transport offer

The public transport offer at the district's Tier 1 settlements is set out in the table below:

Tier 1 Settlement	Public Transport offer
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¹ [How Britain's Bus Services have drastically declined, November 2023, Friends of the Earth](#)

Bilbrook	Bus Services Route 5 to Wolverhampton every 30 mins Monday-Saturday, every 60 minutes on Sunday.
	Bus service subsidy Route 5 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services Services to Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Telford, Shrewsbury every 60 minutes Monday-Sunday.
Cheslyn Hay	Bus Services Routes 70/71 to Cannock and Wolverhampton every 30 minutes Monday-Friday, every 60 mins Saturday (route 71 to Essington only on a Saturday).
	Bus service subsidy Routes 70 and 71 are subsidised by SCC between Cheslyn Hay and Wolverhampton.
	Train services 30-minute rail service Monday-Saturday (60 minutes on Sunday) from Landywood to Cannock, Rugeley, Walsall and Birmingham.
Codsall	Bus Services Route 5 to Wolverhampton every 30 minutes Monday-Saturday, every 60 minutes on Sunday.
	Bus service subsidy Route 5 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services Services to Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Telford, Shrewsbury every 60 minutes Monday-Sunday.
Great Wyrley	Bus Services Route 1 every 60 minutes to Cannock and Huntington Monday-Friday, route 71 every 60 minutes to Cannock and Wolverhampton Monday-Friday (Saturday every 60 minutes to Cannock and Essington), route X51 every 30 minutes Monday-Sunday to Cannock, Bloxwich, Walsall and Birmingham.
	Bus service subsidy Route 1 is commercial, route 71 is subsidised by SCC between Cheslyn Hay and Wolverhampton, route X51 is subsidised by SCC on evenings and Sundays.
	Train services 30-minute rail service Monday-Saturday (60 min on Sunday) from Landywood to Cannock, Rugeley, Walsall and Birmingham.
Penkridge	Bus Services Routes 875/876 every 30 minutes Monday-Saturday to Stafford, every 60 mins to Cannock, Brewood, Coven and Wolverhampton.
	Bus service subsidy Route 875 is subsidised by SCC during the evenings, route 876 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services

	30-minute rail service Monday-Saturday (every 60 minutes on Sunday) to Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Stafford and Liverpool.
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Tier 1 summary

All Tier 1 settlements include bus services to neighbouring towns or cities that run every 30 minutes. However, it is noted that some villages are served by multiple routes (e.g Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay), whereas other villages are served by only one route (e.g Codsall/Bilbrook). As Bilbrook/Codsall and Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley are adjoining settlements, it may be that residents access bus services in the neighbouring village, and vice versa. The vast majority of bus services at these settlements are supported by an element of subsidy, with limited fully commercial services.

With regard to rail services, services from both Codsall and Bilbrook stations are operated by West Midlands Railways stopping between Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street. Journey times to Birmingham New Street are around 42 minutes, although the peak service in the morning to Birmingham has a journey time of 53 minutes. This service does not use the direct route between Wolverhampton and Birmingham so is around 10 to 15 minutes slower than a service along the direct line. Codsall station also gets two extra morning peak journeys and one extra afternoon peak return journey Monday to Friday to Birmingham New Street which do operate via the direct line, so are faster.

Landywood station is served by the half hourly Monday to Saturday (hourly Sunday) Chase Line service between Rugeley Trent Valley, Hednesford, Cannock, Walsall and Birmingham New Street. Most services also operate direct through to Birmingham International station for the NEC and Birmingham Airport. The journey time to Birmingham New Street from Landywood is around 35 minutes.

Penkridge station is served by the half hourly Monday to Saturday (hourly Sunday) London Northwestern service between Liverpool Lime Street, Crewe, Stafford, Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street. Journey time to/from Birmingham is around 28-35 minutes, depending on the direction of travel.

Accordingly, residents of all Tier 1 settlements can access Birmingham and Wolverhampton every day by either train or bus, with a 30-minute frequency on most days of the week.

Tier 2 settlements – public transport offer

The public transport offer at the district's Tier 2 settlements is set out in the table below:

Tier 2 Settlement	Public Transport offer
Brewood	Bus Services Route 876 every 60 minutes Monday-Saturday to Coven, Wolverhampton, Penkridge and Stafford. No routes available on a Sunday.
	Bus service subsidy Route 876 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services

	None.
Huntington	<p>Bus Services Route 1 every 60 minutes to Cannock and Great Wyrley Monday-Friday, route 74 every 30 minutes Monday -Saturday to Cannock and Stafford. From 20th July 2025 evenings and Sunday journeys will be provided on route 74.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Routes 1 and 74 are commercial. Additional services on route 74 introduced from 20th July 2025 will be subsidised by SCC.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Kinver	<p>Bus Services Route 242 every 30 minutes Monday-Friday (every 60 minutes on a Saturday) to Stourton and Stourbridge. Route 580 provides two journeys a day on Tuesday/Thursday/Friday to Kidderminster. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 242 is fully subsidised by SCC. Route 580 is fully subsidised by Worcestershire County Council.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Perton	<p>Bus Services Routes 10/10A run every 20-30 minutes Monday-Friday to Wolverhampton, every 30 minutes on a Saturday and every 60 minutes on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) subsidises the 10/10A into Wolverhampton.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Wombourne	<p>Bus Services Route 15 runs every 30 minutes Monday-Saturday to Himley, Kingswinford and Merry Hill. Route 16 runs every 20 minutes Monday-Friday, every 30 minutes Saturday, every 60 minutes Sunday to Wolverhampton, Swindon, Kingswinford and Stourbridge. Route 16A provides additional evening and Sunday journeys to Wolverhampton.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy SCC subsidises all route 15 journeys in Staffordshire, and the evening and Sunday journeys on route 16A to Wolverhampton. TfWM subsidises the remainder of the 15/16 routes.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>

Tier 2 summary

Whilst there is some variation in the number and frequency of bus services in Tier 2 villages, all villages include bus services to neighbouring towns or cities that run every 30 minutes, with the exception of Brewood which only runs every 60 minutes on Monday to Saturday. A number of villages have multiple routes, with Wombourne having the greatest number and frequency of services. The vast majority of bus services at these settlements are supported by an element of subsidy, with limited fully commercial services. None of the Tier 2 settlements are considered in walking distance of a railway station meaning that none of these settlements have direct access to Birmingham. It is also notable that some Tier 2 villages have no public transport options at all on a Sunday (e.g Kinver and Brewood).

Tier 3 settlements – public transport offer

The public transport offer at the district's Tier 3 settlements is set out in the table below:

Tier 3 Settlement	Public Transport offer
Coven	<p>Bus Services Route 876 runs every 60 minutes Monday-Saturday to Brewood, Wolverhampton, Penkridge and Stafford. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 876 is fully subsidised by SCC.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Essington	<p>Bus Services Route 71 runs every 60 minutes Monday to Friday to Wolverhampton, Great Wyrley, Cheslyn Hay, Cannock. Every 60 minutes Saturday to Great Wyrley, Cheslyn Hay and Cannock only. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 71 is subsidised between Wolverhampton and Cheslyn Hay by SCC.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Featherstone	<p>Bus Services Route 70 runs every 60 minutes Monday to Saturday to Wolverhampton, Cheslyn Hay and Cannock. Route 67 provides three additional journeys per day Monday-Friday to Brinsford, Wolverhampton, Shareshill, Wedges Mills and Cannock. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 67 is fully subsidised by SCC, route 70 is subsidised by SCC between Cheslyn Hay and Wolverhampton.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Pattingham	<p>Bus Services Route 10A runs every 30 minutes Monday-Friday to Perton and Wolverhampton. No routes available on weekends.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 10A is fully subsidised by SCC between Pattingham and Perton.</p>

	Train services None.
Shareshill	Bus Services Shareshill Village is served by route 67 which operates 3 journeys per day Monday-Friday to Featherstone, Brinsford, Wolverhampton, Wedges Mills and Cannock. Route 70 operates every 60 minutes Monday-Saturday along the A460 between Cannock, Cheslyn Hay, Featherstone and Wolverhampton. No routes available on a Sunday. Bus service subsidy Route 67 is fully subsidised by SCC, route 70 is subsidised by SCC between Cheslyn Hay and Wolverhampton.
	Train services None.
Swindon	Bus Services Route 16 runs every 20 minutes Monday-Friday, every 30 minutes Saturday, and every 60 minutes Sunday to Wolverhampton, Wombourne, Kingswinford and Stourbridge. Bus service subsidy Route 16 is subsidised by TfWM.
	Train services None.
Wheaton Aston	Bus Services Route 877 operates 3-4 buses per day Monday-Saturday to Stafford. No routes available on a Sunday. Bus service subsidy Route 877 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services None.

Tier 3 summary

There is considerable variation between frequency of bus services in Tier 3 settlements, with Swindon in particular benefitting from a good service (20-minute services Monday-Friday) due to its location along Wolverhampton to Stourbridge route 16. Most other Tier 3 villages have hourly services during Monday-Friday. Wheaton Aston can be considered an outlier, running only 3-4 services a day, reflecting its relatively more remote location. All bus services at Tier 3 settlements are subsidised. None of the Tier 3 settlements are considered in walking distance of a railway station meaning that none of these settlements have direct access to Birmingham. It is also notable that none of the Tier 3 settlements have public transport services running on a Sunday, with the exception of a 60 minute service at Swindon, with Pattingham having no service at all across the whole weekend.

Tier 4 settlements – public transport offer

The public transport offer at the district's Tier 4 settlements is set out in the table below:

Tier 4 Settlement	Public Transport offer
Bednall	No public transport.
Bishops Wood	Only public transport is a school bus to Wolgarston High School (Penkridge) that can be used by anyone.
Bobbington	Only public transport is a school bus to Kinver that can be used by anyone.
Dunston	<p>Bus Services Routes 875/876 run every 30 minutes along the A449 Monday-Saturday to Penkridge and Stafford, every 60 minutes to Cannock, Brewood, Coven and Wolverhampton. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 875 is subsidised by SCC during the evenings, route 876 is fully subsidised by SCC.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Himley	<p>Bus Services Route 15 runs every 30 minutes Monday-Saturday to Wombourne, Kingswinford and Merry Hill. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy SCC subsidises all route 15 journeys in Staffordshire.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Seisdon	No public transport.
Trysull	No public transport.

Tier 4 summary

The majority of Tier 4 settlements have no public transport provision. Dunston and Himley are notable exceptions, with both settlements benefitting from a good (every 30 minutes) service during the week. This is reflective of being located within close proximity to a key transport corridor (A449) running through the district. These are also the only Tier 4 settlements with direct public transport access to neighbouring towns/cities e.g. Stafford and Wolverhampton. All bus services at Tier 4 settlements are subsidised. None of the Tier 4 settlements are considered in walking distance of a railway station.

Tier 5 settlements – public transport offer

The public transport offer at the district's Tier 5 settlements is set out in the table below:

Tier 5 Settlement	Public Transport offer
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Acton Trussell	<p>Bus Services One journey per day Monday-Saturday route 876 to Penkridge, Brewood, Coven and Wolverhampton. Two journeys per day Monday-Saturday route 876 to Stafford. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 876 is fully subsidised by SCC.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Blymhill	No public transport.
Brineton	No public transport.
Burnhill Green	No public transport.
Calf Heath	No public transport.
Codsall Wood	No public transport.
Coppenhall	No public transport.
Enville	Kinver Community Bus, 1 journey to Kinver on a Friday.
Gospel End	No public transport.
Great Chatwell	No public transport.
Halfpenny Green	Only public transport is a school bus to Kinver that can be used by anyone.
Hatherton	No public transport.
Kingswood	<p>Bus Services Route 891 every 60 minutes Monday-Friday (every 120 mins Saturday) to Albrighton, Shifnal, Telford and Wolverhampton. No routes available on a Sunday.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route 891 is a commercially operated service.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Lapley	Only public transport is a school bus to Wolgarston High School (Penkridge) that can be used by anyone.
Lawnswood	No public transport.
Lower Penn	No public transport.
Newtown	<p>Bus Service Route X51 every 30 minutes Monday-Sunday to Great Wyrley, Cannock, Bloxwich, Walsall and Birmingham.</p> <p>Bus service subsidy Route X51 is subsidised by SCC on evenings/Sundays.</p> <p>Train services None.</p>
Oaken	No public transport.
Saredon	No public transport.
Springhill	<p>Bus Service Route 71 runs nearby on Bursnips Road every 60 minutes Monday to Friday to Wolverhampton, Great Wyrley, Cheslyn Hay, Cannock. Every 60 minutes Saturday to Great Wyrley, Cheslyn Hay and Cannock only. No routes available on a Sunday.</p>

	Bus service subsidy Route 71 is subsidised between Wolverhampton and Cheslyn Hay by SCC.
	Train services None.
Stourton	Bus Service Route 242 every 30 minutes Monday-Friday (every 60 minutes on a Saturday) to Kinver and Stourbridge. No routes available on a Sunday. Bus service subsidy Route 242 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services None.
Stretton	No public transport.
Wedges Mills	Bus Services Route 67 which operates 3 journeys per day Monday-Friday to Cannock, Shareshill, Featherstone, Brinsford and Wolverhampton. No routes available on weekends. Bus service subsidy Route 67 is fully subsidised by SCC.
	Train services None.
Weston-under-Lizard	No public transport.

Tier 5 summary

The vast majority of Tier 5 settlements have no public transport options reflecting their rural nature and lack of services and facilities. There are however a limited number of Tier 5 settlements where their location, in proximity to key transport routes (e.g Newtown's proximity to the A34), means that they benefit from buses serving much larger nearby towns and villages.

Financial support for bus services

SCC and neighbouring Local Authorities provide financial support to bus services that would not otherwise be able to operate commercially. Staffordshire County Council's BSIP provides detailed information on bus services and subsidies which has been updated to June 2025 (reflected in the tables above).

Operators are experiencing significant cost increases related to staff wages, national insurance contributions, vehicles and other operating costs. Patronage is not increasing to offset these costs and therefore Staffordshire expects more services to become unviable on a commercial basis. Cost rises are leading to an increasingly unstable environment for bus operators.

Some supported bus services operating within South Staffordshire are managed by Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM). TfWM is currently providing some financial support to National Express, but details of this are not broken down by route. Therefore, the tables above assume that all National Express services are subsidised by TfWM.

Bus franchising in the West Midlands will occur within the lifetime of the Local Plan. Many key routes from South Staffordshire into the West Midlands will be included in the franchised network including services to Wombourne, Codsall and Bilbrook. This is not an exhaustive or confirmed list. TfWM will define the service requirements within the bus franchise and cross boundary services will be considered in collaboration with SCC.

Within the BSIP, it was recognised that certain routes within South Staffordshire require financial support within the 2024/25 financial year, including the service 10 from Perton to Wolverhampton and service 15 from Wombourne to Merry Hill, which has recently been changed as part of a review by TfWM. SCC are still looking at enhancements to certain services where possible; within the BSIP this includes routes 70/71 from Cannock to Wolverhampton via Cheslyn Hay, Featherstone and Essington. A revised service on the Stafford to Wolverhampton corridor via Penkridge and Brewood has been implemented as suggested in the BSIP. This has resulted in faster journey times on the corridor as a whole, although the frequency of services at Wheaton Aston has been reduced, and Bishops Wood no longer has a public transport service other than a school bus to Wolgaston High School (Penkridge).

Conclusion

As demonstrated through this paper, access to public transport in South Staffordshire varies greatly between settlements, as is largely reflective of the characteristics of the district (rural district on the edge of a large conurbation with no towns/cities of its own). However, broadly speaking, villages in a higher settlement tier (e.g Tier 1) have a better public transport offer than lower tier settlements. Clearly there may be some exceptions, for example, where a lower tier settlement is on a main A road, and therefore benefits from services serving much larger nearby towns and villages (e.g Newtown).

It is important that the Council is able to define which settlements are ‘well served by public transport’ as this is one of the considerations for identifying the most sustainable locations for Green Belt release (NPPF paragraph 147) and for determining where to promote minimum density standards (NPPF paragraphs 129(a) and 146(b)). In SSC’s view, the evidence in this paper supports the view that the district’s Tier 1 settlements can be considered the only locations ‘well served by public transport’.

Looking at bus services in isolation, some other villages would appear to benefit from at least comparable levels of service as Tier 1 settlements. For example, Wombourne, a Tier 2 settlement has a good bus service, including the Route 16 that runs every 20 minutes Monday-Friday. Even Swindon, a Tier 3 settlement is served well by the Route 16 bus, although this is purely by virtue of its location.

Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the presence of access to a railway station within walking distance at Tier 1 settlements does elevate these settlements above all others, in terms of considering whether they are “well-served by public transport”. The majority of railway stations at Tier 1 settlements have at least an hourly service to Wolverhampton, which the district shares the strongest functional relationship with of all neighbouring authorities. Equally, all have direct services to Birmingham, which is the main employment centre for the West Midlands. This specifically sets them apart from all villages in Tiers 2-5, which have no direct

access to Birmingham (with the exception of Tier 5 Newtown). The mixture of bus and railways services available at Tier 1 settlements provides commuters with a choice of public transport modes (unlike other Tier settlements). This is a clear advantage, recognising that some commuters, due to personal circumstances, may be willing to commute by train but not via bus. It should also be noted that a focus on railway stations would align with the government's direction of travel for growth, with recent announcements indicating a presumption in favour of development in zones surrounding train stations².

As evidenced in this note, there is also a heavy reliance on subsidies to support the operation of the majority of bus services in the district. With the introduction of bus franchising forthcoming, it is unclear what impact this may have on services moving forward. SSC would therefore have potential concerns about access to public transport in Tier 2 settlements and below over the plan period, with a sole reliance on bus services. Having a choice of public transport modes available (as is the case at Tier 1 settlements) clearly provides a greater confidence that a level of public transport service will continue at these settlements moving forward, supporting the case that these settlements are those within the district well served by public transport.

² [*The Guardian, Reeves thinks big on planning and growth with housebuilding project, 26th January 2025*](#)

Appendix 1: methodology for compiling accessibility mapping used in the Rural Services and Facilities Audit 2021.

Analysis using TRACC Accessibility Planning software was undertaken by Staffordshire County Council to feed into the identification of the most sustainable locations across South Staffordshire and provide a basis for establishing the relative sustainability of settlements based on existing service provision.

TRACC calculates journey times based upon public transport timetable data, road network information and a range of user-defined parameters.

A maximum journey time threshold of 60 minutes was set for the Public Transport and Bus calculations (which included the access to employment calculation). This includes the initial walk time to the stop, and interchange time plus the final walk from the stop to the destination. The software computes a journey time for every 10-minute interval within the defined time period to the nearest destination point and the shortest journey times are returned. Therefore, the accessibility contour maps represent the best journey time that can be achieved within the defined time period. This is via the road and footpath network, so better simulates an actual journey rather than just a straight-line distance from origin to first stop or from the final stop to the destination point. The maximum walk distance to access a public transport stop was set at 350m.

The bus timetables used were the most up to date including known service changes at the time of calculation but also reflecting the likely provision to strategic employment sites as per the S106 requirements for these sites. The most up to date rail timetable was also used for the analysis.

For some destination types, such as employment, it is not appropriate to calculate accessibility to the nearest destination point as the nearest point of employment may not be suitable i.e. lack of job choice. For employment destinations a Hansen score was calculated. This combines the number of destinations that can be accessed within a 60-minute journey time with the disbenefits of travel in terms of journey time and the total number of jobs available at the destination. The higher the score, the greater the level of access and choice.

All of the other accessibility calculations are based upon the shortest travel time to the nearest destination as this is a more likely scenario.