

Shifnal – Improving Rail services



An evening peak service to Shifnal, with typical levels of overcrowding

Shifnal Forward Transport Action Group
March 2015

Executive Summary

The town of Shifnal is expanding rapidly, through multiple housing developments totalling an additional c1,500 households. The population is projected to increase by 54% in the 10 year period to 2021, the early impact of which is already being felt through increased use of rail services. In the year to 31 March 2014 passenger usage at Shifnal railway station increased by 9.54%, from 121,628 to 133,230 (*source, ORR Station usage statistics*), as many of the new residents of Shifnal choose to travel to Wolverhampton and Birmingham for work, education and leisure. Trains in both the morning and evening peaks are heavily overcrowded, as are some off peak services, particularly at weekends. With the population at Shifnal set to increase further, the pressure on rail services will continue to grow. Urgent action is required to alleviate overcrowding, accommodate future growth, and to encourage sustainable modal transfer from car to rail.

Priorities for the short term (2015-2016) are:

1. **Morning Peak:** to provide extra capacity towards Birmingham, the addition of a Shifnal call to the existing 0655 Shrewsbury to Birmingham New Street service (operated by London Midland), which currently passes Shifnal at 0719.
2. **Evening Peak:** to provide extra capacity from Birmingham, addition of Shifnal calls to the 1709 Birmingham International to Llandudno, and 1809 Birmingham International to Aberystwyth (both operated by Arriva Trains Wales).
3. **Station improvements:** additional customer information screens, provision of secure cycle parking, and the raising the visibility and environment of the station.

Priorities for the medium to longer term (2017-2024) are:

4. **Longer Trains:** London Midland to allocate the diesel trains that will become surplus in 2017 (on completion of the Walsall-Rugeley electrification) to strengthen existing services on the Shrewsbury – Birmingham corridor. Agreement will be required with the Department for Transport to reallocate the rolling stock.
5. **Increased frequency:** as part of the specification for the replacement London Midland franchise in 2017, an increase in frequency of services calling at Shifnal is proposed, raising the service to 2 trains per hour each way, all day.
6. **Station improvements:** provision of additional car parking spaces at the station.

A full list of recommendations is in Section 6

The report is addressed to Shropshire Council Integrated Transportation Officer and West Midlands Rail, who aim to take responsibility with DfT for specifying and managing local rail services in the region from 2017.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Shifnal is a small town located mid-way between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, and is within easy commuting range of these cities, Telford and Birmingham. The town is earmarked for significant growth in the period to the year 2021, with much housing development underway or confirmed at 9 sites around the town including Haughton Road (400 dwellings) and Wolverhampton Road (538 dwellings). In total 1,459 additional households will be provided by 2021, representing almost 50% growth from the 2011 figure of just over 3,000 homes.

1.2 The growth of the town naturally leads to an increase in the population. As the initial housing development has completed in the last year or so, the population has increased, with a further significant increase expected in the next few years, as per the table below.

2011 (Census)	6,240
2015 (Estimate)	6,771 (+9% in 4 years)
2021 (Forecast)	9,596 (+54% in 10 years)

1.3 Furthermore, Telford and Wrekin Council are expected to approve a further 1,600 homes at East Priorslee within the next 12 months. Located less than 3 miles from Shifnal, residents of this development may find it more convenient to travel to Shifnal station to travel towards Wolverhampton and Birmingham, with an easier drive, free parking and cheaper rail fares than the alternative at Telford Central.

1.4 Many residents of Shifnal travel to Telford, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, and increasingly, Birmingham for work, education or leisure purposes. As the population increases, it is expected that an increased share of the population will commute 'out of town' to work, having relocated to Shifnal due to the attractive nature of the town and the transport links. However, the forecast increase in population is likely to overwhelm the existing public transport provision at Shifnal.

1.5 This report looks at the impact this will have on Shifnal rail services, which are already under pressure at peak times, and which have increased at a greater rate than the population.

1.6 During the initial scoping of the report, we learned that the current rail franchise, operated by London Midland, is due to be replaced by a new franchise in 2017. Consultation about a new franchise specification starts in late summer this year, 2015. It is imperative that the town's voice should be heard now, and not lost if there should be political changes as a result of the General Election in May.

1.7 We also became aware of a new organisation, West Midlands Rail (WMR), a government-sponsored body created 12 months ago with a view to overseeing all local rail services in the West Midlands. Working together with partner local authorities, including Shropshire Council, WMR wishes to take responsibility, with the DfT, for specifying and managing local rail services in the region from 2017, in line with the franchising programme for London

Midland coincident with the start date of the new franchise. We are therefore seeking the support of WMR to bring improvements to the current service at Shifnal.

- 1.8 Therefore this report :
- **examines** the current train service,
 - **identifies** potential problems in current and future capacity and service provision,
 - **proposes** priorities agreed by Shifnal Forward Transport Group for improvements, and
 - **recommends** ways to achieve these in the short, medium and long term.
- 1.9 We will ensure that the report is available to Shropshire Council, West Midlands Rail and the Department for Transport, this month, in this window of opportunity. It will also inform the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan to be published later this year.
- 1.10 The report has been researched by the Shifnal Forward Transport group of volunteers, working with Shifnal Town Council, Shropshire Council, the nascent West Midlands Rail group of local authorities, together with many willing volunteers and rail users in the town. We offer sincere thanks to all who gathered information and helped in compiling this report.

David Curtis
Shifnal Forward Transport Group
March 2015

2 Current Service Provision and Usage



2.1 Service Provision

- 2.1.1 Shifnal is approximately half way along the Wolverhampton – Shrewsbury main line, a strategic route that links London and the West Midlands to Shropshire and both Mid and North Wales (Powys, the Welsh coast and Holyhead).
- 2.1.2 Passenger traffic to and from Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton and Birmingham comprises
- commuting and business travel between the various towns and cities,
 - students of colleges in Telford, Wellington, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton and Birmingham
 - leisure traffic, principally shoppers and tourists
 - Military personnel for RAF Cosford and MoD Donnington
- 2.1.3 The line has nationwide connectivity with only one change:
- From Shrewsbury there are direct services to Swansea, Cardiff, West Wales and Holyhead, Chester and Manchester.
 - From Wolverhampton direct services go to Glasgow, Liverpool, the North West, Southampton, Bournemouth, Oxford and London.
 - From Birmingham there are trains to the cities of the East Midlands, Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham, Leicester, further north to Edinburgh and Newcastle, and south to Bristol, Devon and Cornwall.
- 2.1.4 The passenger traffic is catered for by a train service that has remained largely unchanged for over 20 years. Shifnal has an hourly service off peak to Wolverhampton and Birmingham, with an extra train in the morning peak. The balancing service from Birmingham towards Telford and stations to Shrewsbury is also hourly, again with a peak extra. All services are provided by London Midland (LM), save for the last train in each direction Monday to Saturday, and all services on Sundays, which are provided by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW). The Sunday service is operated every two hours, and is provided on a commercial basis, i.e. it is not specified by the Department for Transport and (presumably) therefore operates without subsidy.
- 2.1.5 All services Monday to Saturday are formed of Class 170 trains in 2, 3 or 4 coach formation. Peak services are usually formed of 4 coaches. Sunday services are often formed of a single carriage Class 153 unit.
- 2.1.6 Two services depart Shifnal in the morning peak at 07.42 and 08.13, arriving Wolverhampton at 08.05 and 08.36, and Birmingham New Street at 08.23 and 08.55 respectively. These two morning peak services are popular as the other morning trains are not conveniently timed for the majority of those who work in Wolverhampton or Birmingham with arrivals at the latter at 07.17 and 09.55.

2.1.7 In the evening peak, the two principal commuter trains from Birmingham to Shifnal are at 17:05 and 17:49, departing Wolverhampton at 17:25 and 18:10, and arriving Shifnal at 17:46 and 18:32 respectively.

2.1.8 Other passenger trains pass through the station non-stop:

- 1 per hour from Aberystwyth or North Wales to Birmingham International (for the NEC and airport) operated by Arriva Trains Wales
- 2 trains per day from Shrewsbury to London Euston operated by Virgin Trains
- 1 train a day on a London Midland service from Shrewsbury to Birmingham (dep Telford at 07:15), with no balancing return journey in the evening. **(see Appendix 1)**

2.1.9 The line sees regular freight services on a daily basis, including:

- biomass for Ironbridge Power Station
- coal for Rugeley Power station
- engineering and construction trains for Network Rail

2.2 Current Usage

2.2.1 The table below provides passenger numbers using the station per year (ORR Station Usage Estimates, year ending 31 March)

Year	2005	2008	2011	2013	2014
Passengers	50,332	80,233	104,222	121,628	133,230

2.2.2 We believe that these figures are understated: at peak times the guard/conductor cannot get through the train due to overcrowding, and the barriers at Wolverhampton and Birmingham are often unmanned even at peak times. As such many passengers travelling will unfortunately not be paying their fare, leading to an underestimate of the popularity of the line, and a not insignificant loss of revenue.

2.2.3 Nevertheless, the data for 2014 represents 28% growth in 3 years, 108% in 7 years, and 165% in 9 years. When compared to the current estimated population, it is calculated that each Shifnal resident makes 19.7 rail trips per year to or from Shifnal station.

2.2.4 The current services at peak times are well loaded. In the morning peak, the typical level of overcrowding on the 4 car services is around 50 passengers standing on approach to Wolverhampton, and as many as 70 between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. In the evening peak, services are always full and standing from both Birmingham and Wolverhampton, with up to 40 standing until Codsall or Albrighton. If any peak service is cancelled, or formed of fewer coaches than normal, very severe overcrowding takes place, and passengers are unable to board at some stations.

2.2.5 During off peak times (09:30 to 16:00) hourly services are busy but not overcrowded on Mondays to Fridays. The trains are however very heavily loaded on Saturdays, with shoppers heading to Birmingham and football traffic to Wolverhampton and to a lesser extent Birmingham.

2.2.6 From our passenger surveys (**Appendix 1**) we estimate that there are around 80 regular weekday commuters from Shifnal, most of whom travel to and from Birmingham. This number

is expected to increase significantly in the next 5 years; were the numbers to increase in line with population growth, an additional 45 commuters per day would use the train service towards Birmingham. The existing service provision simply cannot accommodate this level of growth, and without additional capacity, it is reasonable to assume that prospective passengers will not travel, or use alternative modes of transport, principally the car.



An evening peak service to Shifnal, with typical levels of overcrowding

3 Service Proposals

- 3.1 We have three proposals that provide an increase in effective capacity both at Shifnal and along the line as a whole. All can be accommodated within the existing or proposed resource base of the current franchises. We believe these can be provided relatively quickly and at minimum cost. A fourth proposal, requiring infrastructure alterations is for consideration in the longer term.

3.2 Proposal 1 – additional calls in current non-stop services

- 3.2.1 The current morning peak timetable has a gap of 78 minutes between 0624 and 0742 for services to Wolverhampton and Birmingham. As noted in section 2, the 0742 service is overcrowded with passengers standing as a matter of routine, and little scope to accommodate future growth. Within this service gap, there are three trains that pass through Shifnal without stopping en route to Birmingham and beyond. These are (times shown passing Shifnal):

- 06:58 to Birmingham International (Arriva Trains Wales)
- 07:04 to London Euston (Virgin)
- 07:19 to Birmingham New Street (London Midland)

The last of these services is an oddity, being the only London Midland service in the timetable on the line not to call at Shifnal, and is relatively lightly loaded. There is scope in the timetable for it to commence its journey 2 minutes earlier from Shrewsbury, such that it can call at Shifnal at 0718, and continue in its current path to Birmingham New Street. This would provide a useful service for those wishing to be at Birmingham for 0800, and relieve the overcrowding on the following 0742 service from Shifnal.

- 3.2.3 The current evening peak timetable has one additional train to the usual hourly pattern which departs Birmingham at 1749, only 16 minutes in advance of the next hourly service at 1805. Both services are heavily overcrowded. Additional services from Birmingham between 1605-1705, 1705-1749, and 1805-1905 would relieve the overcrowding and offer additional capacity for growth. There are three Arriva Trains Wales services that operate non-stop through Shifnal at these times as follows:

- 16:09 Birmingham International to Aberystwyth (Shifnal 16.55)
- 17:09 Birmingham International to Llandudno (Shifnal 17.57)
- 18:09 Birmingham International to Aberystwyth (Shifnal 18.55)

All of these services have long station dwell times at Shrewsbury, or 1½ minutes 'pathing' allowance in the timetable between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, or both. Therefore inserting a Shifnal call on these services will not affect other services in the timetable, nor extend journey times for other passengers.

- 3.2.4 These changes can all be completed with a simple change to the timetable, and thus can be delivered relatively quickly. **We therefore recommend that LM and ATW implement these changes for the timetable change planned in December 2015.**

3.3 Proposal 2 – Longer trains

- 3.3.1 The maximum length of train currently accommodated on the stopping service between Shrewsbury and Birmingham is 4 coaches, limited by the length of the existing platforms. Indeed, some station platforms on the line are too short for 4 coach trains, and this is catered for through the provision and operation of Selective Door Opening (SDO) on the trains concerned.
- 3.3.2 The following peak services are currently planned to be formed of trains of fewer than the maximum 4 coaches:
- 0655 Shrewsbury – Birmingham New Street (2 or 3 coaches)
1605 Birmingham New Street – Shrewsbury (3)
1749 Birmingham New Street – Shrewsbury (3)
1805 Birmingham New Street – Shrewsbury (2)
- 3.3.3 There is currently no spare rolling stock available nationwide that can operate on this line, ie Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs). However, there is an opportunity on the horizon in 2017 when the Walsall – Rugeley electrification is completed. This project releases a number of suitable two coach Class 170 DMUs that are suitable and compatible with the rolling stock currently in use on Shifnal services. Were London Midland or its successor franchise to redeploy two x 2 coach units on to the Shrewsbury – Birmingham peak services above, additional capacity would thus be available at the marginal cost of operation of the unit itself. There would be no requirement for additional operating staff.
- 3.3.4 **We therefore recommend that two DMUs released by the electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley line in 2017 are reserved now for redeployment to the Birmingham – Shrewsbury route to provide longer trains on existing peak services.**

3.4 Proposal 3 - Improved Peak Frequency

- 3.4.1 As noted in Proposal 2 above, there is currently no spare rolling stock available nationwide that can operate on this line, but the Walsall – Rugeley electrification in 2017 presents the opportunity to redeploy suitable rolling stock to the Birmingham – Shrewsbury line.
- 3.4.2 The line has spare capacity for additional services between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, but the line onwards to Birmingham is at full capacity at peak hours, with platform occupation at Birmingham New Street a particular constraint. Nevertheless, additional services between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton could be accommodated with relative ease.
- 3.4.3 The addition of an extra one train per hour, all day, between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton would require an additional two trains to be in service at any one time. This would raise the frequency on the line to 2 trains per hour all day, with a third train in the peak hour. This brings the route more in line with other, similar routes serving the greater West Midlands and surrounding counties:

Line	Off peak services per hour to Birmingham
Lichfield	3
Stratford on Avon	2
Redditch	3
Droitwich	3

- 3.4.4 In addition to the additional cost of leasing the trains and fuel, this proposal would incur the cost of additional staff costs of operation, ie the driver and conductor. However, the increase in frequency to two trains an hour would undoubtedly generate additional traffic over and above that expected from purely lengthening existing trains. Growth apparent from improving train service frequency has been proven at various locations over time, most recently in East Anglia when services on the relatively rural East Suffolk line between Ipswich and Lowestoft were doubled in frequency progressively in 2010 and 2012, leading to 100% growth from 2010 to 2014.
- 3.4.5 This proposal can be considered as either an alternative, or complementary to, Proposal 2. However we believe that future growth will necessitate both proposals 2 and 3 to be implemented in the medium term (2017-2021)
- 3.4.6 **We therefore recommend that initial timetable work and revenue modelling is conducted for the proposed increase in frequency, to inform the specification for the replacement London Midland franchise.**
- 3.4.7 **We further recommend, assuming a positive outcome to the above, two DMUs released by the electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley line in 2017 are reserved now for redeployment for additional services on the Wolverhampton – Shrewsbury route.**

3.5 Proposal 4 - Electrification

- 3.5.1 Electrification of this line from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury has been suggested many times in the past, most recently in the Network Rail Electrification Route Utilisation Strategy (2009). Whilst accepting that there are other priorities for electrification on the rail network, including within the greater West Midlands area, we felt it is important not to lose sight of the benefits that would arise were this line to be similarly upgraded.
- 3.5.2 Electric trains on this route would potentially improve journey times through the more rapid acceleration capabilities of electric rolling stock. Unquestionably, electric trains would improve the travelling environment, lower noise, higher reliability and of course lower emissions. Perhaps more importantly, electric services on this route could perhaps enable greater integration with other outer suburban lines serving Birmingham New Street, almost all of which are currently operated by electric trains. Linking the Shrewsbury line with another route would offer efficiencies in rolling stock and resource usage, and open up potential direct journey opportunities. It would also enable conversion of the services to London Euston to electric trains, thus avoiding the use of diesel trains ‘under the wires’ on these services from Wolverhampton to Euston.
- 3.5.3 We recognise that implementation of electrification will possibly be some 10 years ahead, however we consider it essential to include electrification as an important aspiration, not least because the next round of Development Planning for Shifnal, for the period starting 2026, is

already under consideration, and housing developers are already looking at opportunities to grow the town well beyond the approximately 4,500 homes proposed by the year 2021.

- 3.5.4 **We therefore support wholeheartedly the electrification of the line, and recommend that a detailed investigation into the potential for future electrification of the line is included in the specification for the next franchise.**



A Shrewsbury – London express service, operated by diesel trains despite spending much of the journey ‘under the wires’

4 Shifnal Station: location and facilities

- 4.1 The station is located in the centre of the town, atop a high embankment and adjacent to a viaduct bridging a key road junction. The station has vehicular access from Aston Street, and pedestrian only access from Market Place. The latter access is via a flight of steps, a rather unwelcoming subway, and a long ramp, and is not suitable for mobility impaired passengers. Access for such passengers is via the vehicular approach on Aston Street, and there is no step free access to or from the Shrewsbury bound platform.



Market Place entrance

- 4.2 The station buildings are basic, being the remnants of a facility that was partially demolished in the 1970s. There are two small unglazed bus shelter type waiting areas; additional shelter from inclement weather is available by standing under the roofed pedestrian underpass on the Wolverhampton bound platform. The station buildings are run-down in appearance, and suffer from sporadic vandalism.
- 4.3 The station is unmanned and has no ticket machines, all fares being collected on board the train or at destination. Customer information is limited to an automatic electronic 'next train' indicator on each platform, along with automated announcements of each train in advance of arrival on the relevant platform.
- 4.4 Parking is limited to a small facility immediately next to the Wolverhampton bound platform of 19 marked spaces for which there is no charge. Due to the popularity of the service for passengers from surrounding areas, the car park is full by 07.30 Monday-Friday, and a further 20 or so cars park on Station Approach. Network Rail, owners of Station Approach, has recently restricted parking on the road and has proposals to resurface the road with parking

restrictions imposed that prohibit parking. This is expected to be in place by the end of March 2015.

- 4.5 There is no formal parking or storage facility for cycles, despite the station being less than 5 minutes ride from the all of the built up area of the town.



Run down station building, limited parking



Parking on Station Approach

5 Shifnal Station: proposals for upgrading

5.1 We have three proposals that will improve the facilities at Shifnal station, all of which can be delivered in the short to medium term. Each proposal can be delivered as a stand alone item, however we feel strongly that taken together the overall package will provide a step change enhancement to the accessibility, environment and 'feel' of the station. A fourth proposal for the longer term merits discussion.

5.2 Car Park expansion

5.2.1 The layout of the station, being above street level, means there is limited opportunity to construct a second, formal station car park. However a survey conducted a few years ago by Shifnal Forward volunteers suggested that a further 20 spaces could be provided on waste land adjoining the station approach road. There is also space abutting the current car park immediately to the west, which appears to be used by Network Rail as a storage facility for rail aggregate. If converted to parking this would provide around 12-15 additional spaces. Taken together there is potential to more than double the official parking provision, to cater for the known demand and likely growth.

5.2.2 Funding for station car parks is complex, particular for those that intended to be free of charge. Potential funding for the expansion could come from a Section 106 agreement realised by the planning authority from one or more of the housing developments, the rail industry through future increased ticket revenue, the introduction of a small daily charge, or some combination of the three.

5.2.3 **We recommend that a formal approach is made to Shropshire Council as the planning and transport authority, Network Rail as the station owner, and London Midland as the station operator, to develop a funding package to investigate and then deliver the additional car parking required.**

5.3 Cycling provision

5.3.1 Cycling is becoming more popular both as a leisure pursuit and as a means of personal transport. As noted in section 4, there is no official cycle parking at the station. The new housing developments are being provided with cycle-friendly routes into the town centre, and it can be expected that cycling to the station would be a viable option for many passengers that live in and around the town if the facility was available.

5.3.2 The provision of cycle storage was discussed with London Midland at the start of their current franchise in 2007/8, but no action has been taken. Given the relative ease of provision, and low cost, this is disappointing.

5.3.3 **We recommend that the provision of secure cycle storage is investigated by London Midland in conjunction with Shifnal Town Council, with a view to implementation this calendar year.**

5.4 Station Environment and visibility

5.4.1 As noted in section 4, the station appears run down and generally feels uncared for, with litter and general detritus commonplace in the environs of the station and on Station Approach. There is little shelter from the elements at platform level, the shelters that are provided are unwelcoming, poorly lit and have poor visibility. The entrances to the station are relatively inconspicuous and easy to miss. Information provision at the station entrance is limited to a printed timetable and information board.



Street Level entrance on Market Place, with information board.

5.4.2 Improving the environment and raising the profile of the station in Shifnal can only lead to increased patronage as the station becomes a more prominent part of the town's fabric. Suggested improvements include:

- Replacement of the existing 'bus shelters' on each platform with more modern, well lit, glazed facilities. Numerous types of shelter are available and in use elsewhere on the rail network, and these are readily available and easy to construct. This will improve the station experience for any passenger having to wait, particularly at night or in poor weather.
- Small scale landscaping, both at street level and at platform level, including on the platforms themselves. This will help to make the station look cared for, and potentially could be implemented and maintained by local volunteers.
- Additional and more prominent signage on and near the station, to include a national rail "logo" sign at street level to help people locate the station (see photo for similar example elsewhere)

- Provision of a Customer Information Screen at both the Market Place and Station Approach entrances to display the next few departures (see photo for example of similar provision elsewhere)
- Provision of a drop off / pick up 'Kiss and Ride' bay adjacent to the Market Place entrance.

5.4.3 We therefore recommend that the above environmental and information improvements are delivered as soon as is practicable, either directly by London Midland or through inclusion as a requirement in the next franchise.

5.4.4 We also recommend that the Town Council enters into discussion with London Midland regarding the potential for the station to be 'adopted' by local volunteers, to help maintain a good station environment and to investigate funding arrangements for the proposed improvements.



*Prominent National Rail sign and good landscaping
(Willington station, Derbyshire)*



*Customer Information at station entrance
(Bingham, Notts.)*

5.5 Station Community Hub

5.5.1 It has been suggested that a Community Hub, such as exists at Stratford on Avon, Telford, and Gobowen, be developed at the station. This would be a small enterprise with, for example:

- a news stand
- coffee and refreshment facilities
- rail ticket sales and collection
- local information provision

5.5.2 Such a facility requires a good level of footfall to make the enterprise viable. Typically it is operated by an independent entrepreneur, usually started with private funding, albeit with some agreement in place with the rail operator for the sale of tickets.

5.5.3 This proposal has been discussed with Shifnal Business Forum and other Shifnal Forward Working Groups, and the unanimous view is that whilst this is a welcome and innovative proposal, it would not at present constitute a viable business proposition. This is due to the

lack of suitable available accommodation, located in the right place to secure passing trade for non-rail activity, combined with the current number of passengers using the station.

- 5.5.4 **Nevertheless we recommend that such a proposal be reviewed in 2020 by which time the population of Shifnal, and passenger numbers at the station, are expected to have grown significantly.**

5.6 Disabled Access

- 5.6.1 There is limited access for passengers with limited mobility, for example the elderly, parents with pushchairs, and disabled travellers. There is step-free access to the Wolverhampton-bound platform only, and this is only from the station approach driveway.
- 5.6.2 The Telford-bound platform has no step-free access. Mobility impaired passengers for Shrewsbury are required to travel to Wolverhampton, where there are lifts, and then catch a train back through Shifnal to Shrewsbury, a journey of at least two hours rather than 30 minutes.
- 5.6.3 The issue was last formally considered in 2008, but legislative requirements and financial consideration (at least £0.5m at the time, nearer £1m now) did not represent good value for money when measured against the likely increased patronage.
- 5.6.3 **Nevertheless we recommend that the provision of step - free access to and from the Telford platform side be reviewed, and if appropriate, included in the Invitation To Tender for the new franchise.**

6 Recommendations

We propose the following recommendations are prioritised by time as well as importance for discussion with the Shropshire Council Integrated Transportation Officer in conjunction with West Midlands Rail and presented as appropriate to the Department for Transport this summer as part of the consultation process of the replacement franchise by 2017.

- 1) To provide an improved spread of capacity for passengers from Shifnal and elsewhere on the line in the short term, we propose that Shifnal calls are inserted into the following services from December 2015:
 - 06:55 Shrewsbury to Birmingham New Street (Shifnal 07.19)
 - 16.09 Birmingham International to Aberystwyth (Shifnal 16.55)
 - 17:09 Birmingham International to Llandudno (Shifnal 17.57)
 - 18:09 Birmingham International to Aberystwyth (Shifnal 18.55)
- 2) To provide an increase in capacity in the medium term, two (2) DMUs released by the electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley line in 2017 are reserved now for redeployment to the Birmingham – Shrewsbury route to provide longer trains on existing peak services.
- 3) Initial timetable work and revenue modelling is conducted for a proposed increase in frequency on the Wolverhampton – Shrewsbury route, to inform the specification for the replacement London Midland franchise.
- 4) On the basis of a positive outcome of recommendation 3, a further two DMUs released by the electrification of the Walsall - Rugeley line in 2017 are reserved for redeployment on an increased frequency of service on the Wolverhampton – Shrewsbury route.
- 5) Detailed investigation into the potential for future electrification of the line is included in the specification for the next franchise.
- 6) A formal approach is made to Shropshire Council as the planning and transport authority, Network Rail as the station owner, and London Midland as the station operator, to develop a funding package to investigate and then deliver the additional car parking required.
- 7) The provision of secure cycle storage is investigated by London Midland in conjunction with Shifnal Town Council, with a view to implementation this calendar year.
- 8) Station environment and information improvements, to include new waiting shelters, improved signage and customer information screens, are delivered as soon as is practicable, either directly by London Midland or through inclusion as a requirement in the next franchise.
- 9) Shifnal Town Council enters into discussion with London Midland regarding the potential for the station to be ‘adopted’ by local volunteers, to help maintain a good station environment and to investigate funding arrangements for the proposed improvements.
- 10) A proposal for a Station Community Hub be kept on file and reviewed in 2020.
- 11) To review the provision of step free access.

Appendix 1 Passenger surveys

1. Surveys taken on 20 days on the 07:42 and 08:15 trains from Shifnal in the morning peak to Wolverhampton show that a total average of 77 passengers a day travelled from Shifnal.
2. Although Shifnal passengers are usually able to get a seat, the trains rapidly fill by Bilbrook where on the 07:42 to Wolverhampton, 21 had to stand in **one** of the 4 carriages (seating capacity 55) representing over 38% in excess. The trains continue to Birmingham, having deposited passengers at Wolverhampton but picking up even more for Birmingham. Such overcrowding is a daily event on these trains, and the general view of the long suffering passengers is that the trains are “at full capacity”. If all 4 cars were all over capacity, as we believe they are from observation on 3 other separate journeys, then some 330 passengers alight from the 07:42 at Birmingham, 84 (one third) of whom have stood for at least 20 minutes on a train designed to seat 244.
3. The position is even worse on the return peak trains, where on the 20 trains surveyed, on 6 occasions an average of 26 passengers were still standing at Albrighton, (33 minutes out of Birmingham) and on another two trains an average of 16 were still standing at Cosford, a further 4 minutes.
4. On the 20 days surveyed, an average of 77 passengers boarded the two morning peak trains towards Wolverhampton and Birmingham at Shifnal, and 70 alighted on the two key return services in the evening peak.
5. The peak trains are largely used by regular and knowledgeable commuters, who know where to stand on the platforms and so on, but the less agile, occasional travellers connecting to other trains at Wolverhampton or Birmingham with luggage, push chairs and children in tow, are often disadvantaged and stressed by the overcrowding.

Appendix 2

SHIFNAL Peak Time trains

				Gap
				MINUTES
Mornings	Shifnal-T'ford	Arr Telford	Arr S'bury	
	6.35	6.40	7.01	
	7.10	7.15	7.36	35
	8.07	8.12	8.33	57
	8.46	8.52	9.15	42
	To B'ham	Arr Wolves	Arr B'ham	
	5.51	6.14	6.40	
	6.24	6.47	7.17	37
	7.42	8.05	8.23	66
	8.13	8.36	8.55	32
	9.13	9.36	9.55	60
Evenings	From B'ham	Arr Wolves	Arr Shifnal	
	16.05	16.25	16.46	
	17.05	17.25	17.46	60
	17.46	18.07	18.28	42
	18.05	18.25	18.46	18
	19.05	19.25	19.46	60
	From S'bury	Arr T'ford	Arr Shifnal	
	15.47	16.08	16.13	
	16.47	17.08	17.13	60
	17.47	18.08	18.13	60



Appendix 3

Wolverhampton – Shrewsbury line station usage 2014

	Year ended 31 March 2014	
	No	% change from 2012/13
Bilbrook	120,548	1.7
Codsall	115,486	0.0
Albrighton	89,358	1.7
Cosford	83,652	*25.6
		<i>*from a low base whilst station was rebuilt</i>
Shifnal	133,230	9.5
Telford	1,070,700	3.5
Oakengates	54,620	2.7
Wellington	581,986	4.2
	2,249,580	

2. Shifnal usage in past 4 years

2011	104,222	
2012	121,996	+17.1%
2013	121,628	-0.3%
2014	133,230	+9.5%

3. 2014 Season tickets

Allow for 220 days' usage each

(2012/2013 36,098 journeys)

164 returns per

81 season tickets

day

2013/2014	40,216 journeys	182 returns per day	91 season tickets
		Increase	12.30%

Appendix 4 - Projected House Construction Programme

Site	Builder	Status	2012-15	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Beddoes 1	TW	Complete	178					
Beddoes 2	TW/Gall	G Work		30	55	55	55	55
Beddoes Drs	TW	Building		40				
		Start						
Copp Grn	Barratt	5/15		20	45	45	45	45
		Start						
Haughton	Lion Ct	9/15		50	80	80	80	110
Aston Flds	Redrow	Building	12	40	40	23		
Uplands	Redrow	G/work		10	30	20	8	
Lawton	TW/Gall	G/work		20	40	40	40	20
Various	various	Complete	41	1	6			
DWELLINGS	Annual	Totals	231	211	296	263	228	230

DWELLINGS	Total 2011-2021:	1,459
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Appendix 5 – Population increase (2.3 people per dwelling)

	2012-15	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Annual	531	485	681	605	524	529
Cumulative	531	916	1597	2202	2726	3255

Appendix 6

Development applications to Telford & Wrekin Council in 5 km catchment area of Shifnal station

No time scale	Miller Homes E Priorslee	Celestica E Priorslee	Total	Total
Dwellings	1,000	600	Houses 1,600	Pop'n 3,680