

Consultation Response: Rugby Parkway

Consultee: Railfuture (West Midlands Branch)

About the consultee:

Railfuture is the UK's leading national not for profit, independent, entirely volunteer run organisation, campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain for both passengers and freight and funded solely by its 20,000 affiliated and independent members.

The West Midlands Branch covers the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, the unitary authorities of Telford & Wrekin, Stoke-on-Trent, and the Metropolitan Districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton and represent the concerns of the Rail Users in their area.

Overview:

Railfuture West Midlands strongly welcomes new local stations to the network, and this station provides a great opportunity to serve the nearby large new Houlton residential site, commuting to work at DIRFT, and improved rail access for Daventry residents.

It is unfortunate that last time this project went up the flagpole it was not able to assemble a complete funding package, since it would have been preferable to put the sustainable transport in place prior to occupation of Houlton residential site. Research has shown that transport behaviour is most easily influenced when residents move into a location, but once car-dependency is entrenched in a neighbourhood that collective behaviour is more difficult to change.

Transport for new homes has carried out good research on this topic. <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/>

It is inevitable that the improved connectivity and accessibility that extra stations provides comes at a cost of increased journey times, which we would expect to be in the region of 2 minutes on this route. Our opinion is that the population that will be resident around this station once Houlton is fully built out will make this a good trade-off to make at this location, and we hope that Warwickshire County Council will be supportive of neighbouring local authorities as and when they bring forward proposals for new local stations.

No journey starts and ends at a railway station, so in order to be successful at making entire journeys sustainable we need to look beyond the curtilage of the railway station and consider the entire passenger journey experience. We need to reduce potential points of friction and allow passengers to make their trip in the most sustainable way.

To this end, achieving excellent integration with other modes is essential.

We find it informative that the number of car parking spaces is very well defined with a precise number of parking spaces detailed. The level of provision of non-car transport is far less defined. We would expect the next stage of design iteration to bring the level of design and operational detail for all modes to be brought up to at least the level of detail for car provision, and be deeply disappointed if this is not the case.

For example :-

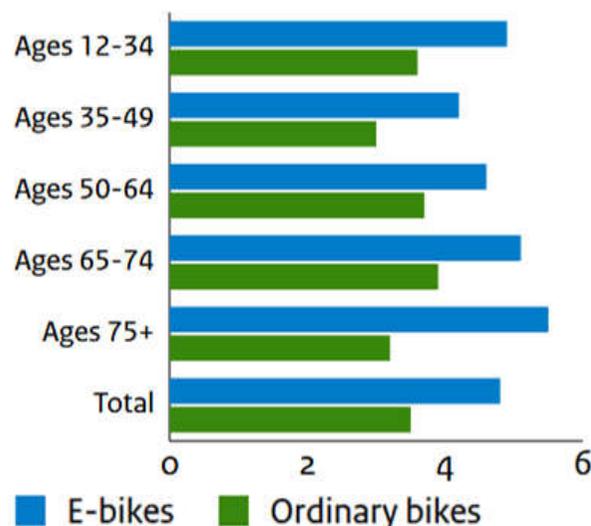
Provision of a bus stop.

No use without a service. Need to communicate with local bus operators to get their view on both the infrastructure and what level of service can be provided – and if the operating hours of that service will match the rail service.

There have been some railway stations with a bus stop that operators have been reluctant to call at because of poor detailed design of turning circles / regular obstruction by other vehicles picking up and dropping off etc.

Bus stop also need appropriate weather protection for waiting passengers.

Distance per trip in kilometres for e-bikes and “ordinary” bikes by age group, 2016



Cycle parking.

It is very welcome to see the use of the word ‘secure’ in the consultation. Bike crime, and fear of crime, is a considerable deterrent to cycle usage, with theft and vandalism having a corrosive effect.

The following two articles are an informative read on the effects of bike crime.

<https://zagdaily.com/featured/why-we-must-stop-bike-thieves-from-getting-away-with-it/>

<https://edwest.substack.com/p/old-britain-has-a-cancer-the-cancer>

Bikes are an increasingly expensive item, and e-bikes even more so.

Data from the Netherlands (graphic left), indicates that e-bike users make trips typically 35% longer than standard bike users. In a situation with a circular catchment around a station, this could almost double (90%) the cycling population catchment for a station – plus the monetisable health benefits this could yield

<https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/reports/2018/04/01/cycling-facts-2018/Cycling+facts+2018.pdf>

When considering whether or not to make a journey by bike, the most significant consideration for a cyclist that has suffered from bike crime is not – what are the roads like – it is – will my bike still be there (and undamaged) when I return ?

When considering if bike parking is sufficiently secure the following questions should be asked.

If I have a £500 bike...

- 1) do I have confidence it will be here and undamaged if I leave my bike here for the duration of a working day ?
- 2) do I have confidence it will be here and undamaged if I leave my bike here for a whole weekend ?

And then repeat for if I have a £2000 e-bike...

- 3) do I have confidence it will be here and undamaged if I leave my bike here for the duration of a working day ?
- 4) do I have confidence it will be here and undamaged if I leave my bike here for a whole weekend ?

We suggest that unless the bike parking facilities are within a covered, secure area with controlled access and CCTV, the answer to some of these four questions will be ‘no’.

Facilities where the answer to these four questions is probably ‘yes’ have been recently installed at Market Harborough

<https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/help-manage/about-us/news-press/emr-opens-new-secure-cycle-hub-at-market-harborough-station>

<https://www.harborough-rail.org.uk/home/category/cycling>

Even the most expensive cycle parking is far, far cheaper per space than car parking.

In addition the health benefits of increasing cycling should also be monetised into the business case for the provision of cycling facilities – and the health dis-benefits of a sedentary lifestyle costed into car park sizing.

Active travel routes

When we look beyond the curtilage of the station the active travel provision it is not continuous which will discourage all but the most confident cyclist, and be extremely off-putting to pedestrians.

The active travel routes from the station to the surrounding community (both the new residents of Houlton and existing Hillmorton area) and to work locations at DIRFT need to be brought up to the current LTN 1/20 design standard if they are to give confidence to the widest demographic of active travellers.



As Chris Boardman (Active Travel England commissioner) put it :-

*“whatever we build must be usable and want to be **used by a competent 12-year-old**. That’s it; simple but also scarily definable. This is because this benchmark, that would make a 12-year-old want to use it and their parents allow them to use it, is the same as that which is also needed by: somebody who hasn’t ridden since childhood, somebody taking their kids to school, a pensioner, somebody lacking in confidence and all of the people who currently drive journeys of less than one kilometre – a staggering 30% of all journeys under 1km are driven. That’s some potential.”* <https://allpartcycling.org/2018/02/09/chris-boardman-speech-january-2018/>



Location 1

At the west end of the housing development the active travel infrastructure basically disappears



Becomes very poorly maintained footpath that isn't even large enough for a single pedestrian to be far enough from the motor vehicle lane to feel safe

Speed limit on this section of road is 40 mph.

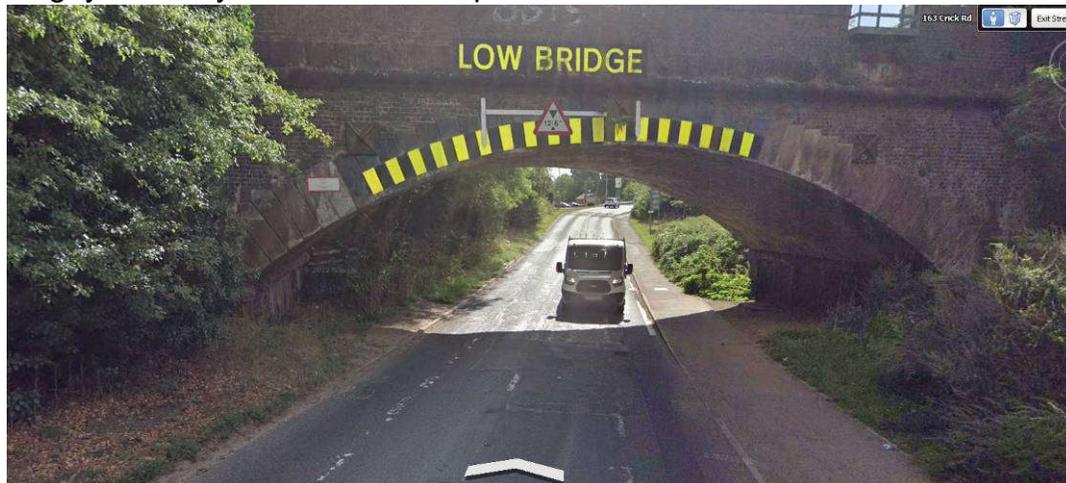


Appears to be sufficient width to re-locate motor-vehicle lanes approx 1 metre to the left and create a $\approx 2\text{m}$ wide shared use path.

While still below standard it would be a short distance under the bridge and is better than nothing.

Consider armco barrier to protect bridge structure on the left, and separate and protect active travellers on the right.

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Appears to be sufficient width to increase width of pavement without altering highway alignment. Locating pedestrians in the lower arch section, with cycle lane closer to the highway could overcome height restriction problems.

Consider armco barriers to visually narrow highway which will naturally reduce vehicle speeds, and protect both bridge structure and provide separation and protection between motor vehicles and active travellers.

The transition from 40mph to 30mph speed limit currently occurs just beyond this bridge on the approach into Hillmorton. Given the increasingly residential nature of occupation we suggest the transition to 30 mph should be at the entrance to the new station



Location 2

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway into side road.

Given the larger number of active travellers accessing the station on the opposite side of the road, and the increasingly residential nature of occupation, the speed limit on the A428 at this location should be reduced to 30mph (moving the transition from 40mph to 30mph some 400m further east, slowing down traffic where it negotiates bends under bridges.)

It appears that the current traffic signals require a pedestrian (unless they are very quick) to wait two cycles to cross this access road into the estate.

Given the likely much higher level of active travel footfall, both walking and wheeling, it is important that active travellers are given higher priority and can cross both the estate access road and A428 in a single traffic light cycle, with a Puffin crossing provided extended pedestrian green times for less mobile walkers.



Location 3

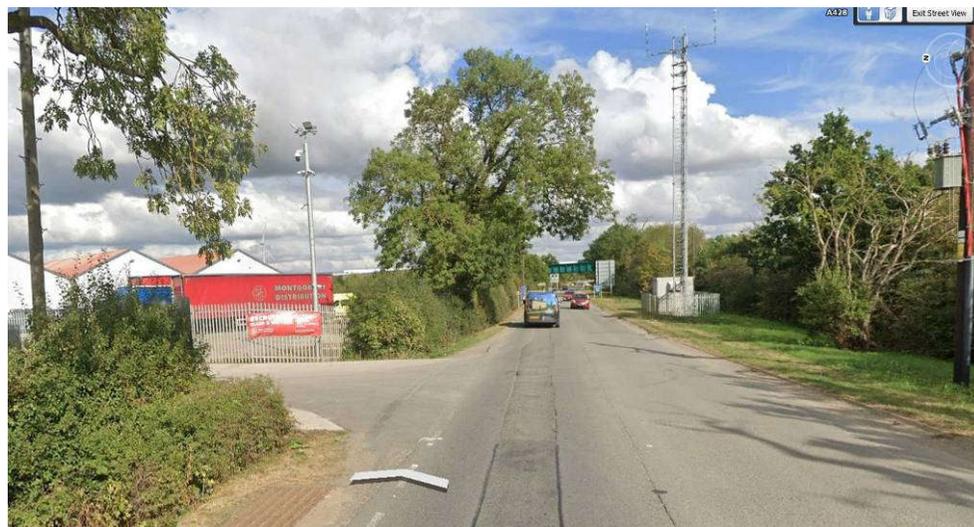
Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway into side road.



Location 4

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway into side road.

Given the increasingly residential nature of frontages onto the A428 at this location as Houlton is built out, give consideration to moving the 40mph to 30mph speed limit transition on the A428 to here, since it is the transition between industrial and residential land use.



Location 5

No active travel provision, not even a pavement, which completely severs employment sites from residential sites.

Sufficient space within existing hedgerows to re-align motor vehicle lanes to the south (right of image), and provide active travel shared use path to the north (left of image).

This would provide a continuous active travel path to the north of the motor vehicle lanes, without active travel users having to cross motor vehicle lanes twice.

Locating active travel route to the south through this short 250m section and creating two additional conflict points at crossings would be unacceptable.

Pedestrians have been observed attempting to navigate this section of

road travelling to work at DIRFT, the lack of active travel infrastructure puts them at considerable risk.



Location 6

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway in individual site accesses.

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Junctions & roundabouts within DIRFT

The entire DIRFT complex area features a very high level of car dependency and a large number of HGV movements to, from and around the site.

If active travellers are to be given confidence that they can safely access the site from the railway station then a high standard of active travel provision must be made to overcome the current inertia of car dependency.

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What is the point of the armco barrier at this location ?

If it is to protect the large road sign from collision with motor vehicles, then surely protecting active travellers is more important than protecting a road sign ? If a vehicle mounted the pavement at this location, an active traveller could be crushed between motor vehicle and barrier.

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Location 7

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – not even an indication on the motor vehicle lanes of the existence of the active travel route, let alone of any prioritisation for active travellers.

Putting up a blue sign on a pole is not active travel provision.

Location 8

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway an individual site access. In addition active travel route deviates significantly from desire line slowing down cyclists.

This isn't even the main HGV entrance to the site, it's the entrance to the building's car park.



Location 9

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic turning off main highway into individual site entrance



Also at this location, completely inadequate and poorly maintained pavement width, this is not even adequate for a single pedestrian, let alone for a bi-directional shared use path. Needs to be at least 3m wide.

Again – blue signs on poles do not provide active travel infrastructure.

And again, what is the purpose of the armco barrier here, it provides no protection for active travellers,



100m further along the road, again armco barrier appears to be protecting street furniture from collision, no protection provided for active travellers, who would be caught between motor vehicle and armco barrier if a motor vehicle mounted the pavement at this location.

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Location 10

Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – active travel route proceeding parallel to main highway should not have to give way to motor vehicle traffic joining main highway from individual site entrance



Location 11

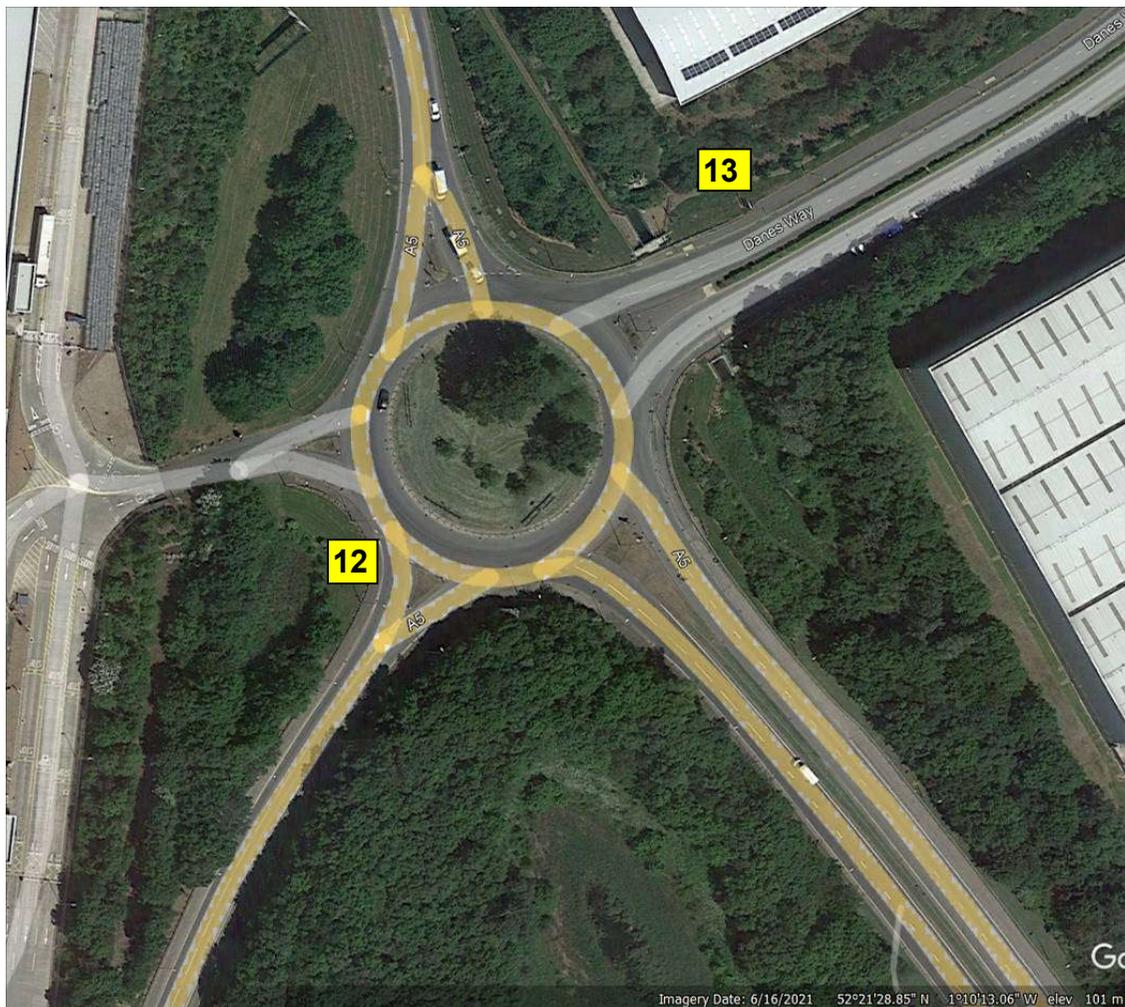
Junction not compliant with LTN 1/20 – not even an indication on the motor vehicle lanes of the existence of the active travel route, let alone of any prioritisation for active travellers.

Inadequate pavement width for bi-directional shared use path.

Consideration should be given to Dutch style roundabout.

Armco barriers again seem to exist to protect street furniture, but offer no protection to active travellers, and are something they would be crushed against if a motor vehicle mounted the pavement.

Erecting a blue sign and doing nothing else to improve the infrastructure is not active travel provision.



Crossing A5 within DIRFT area

The provision for an active traveller to get from location 12 to location 13 is utterly inadequate.

There is next to no provision, not even painted crossings, let alone prioritisation for active travellers to proceed deep into DIRFT if they are working there.

Consideration should be given to a Dutch style roundabout.

From DRIFT to Crick

We have not reproduced it within this document, but unsurprisingly the active travel provision between DRIFT and Crick is similarly poor, with gaps in it that will discourage all but the most confident of active travellers.

From the furthest part of Crick to the centre of DIRFT is only 2 miles, but given the current gaps in LTN 1/20 compliant active travel provision it might as well be to the moon.

The gap in provision (in addition to that described above) is only 600m

From Crick to the proposed station site is only 4km, which is a viable active travel distance, particularly for e-bikes, but without good active travel infrastructure most Crick residents would likely drive to the new station.

Active travel and motor vehicle lanes at junctions

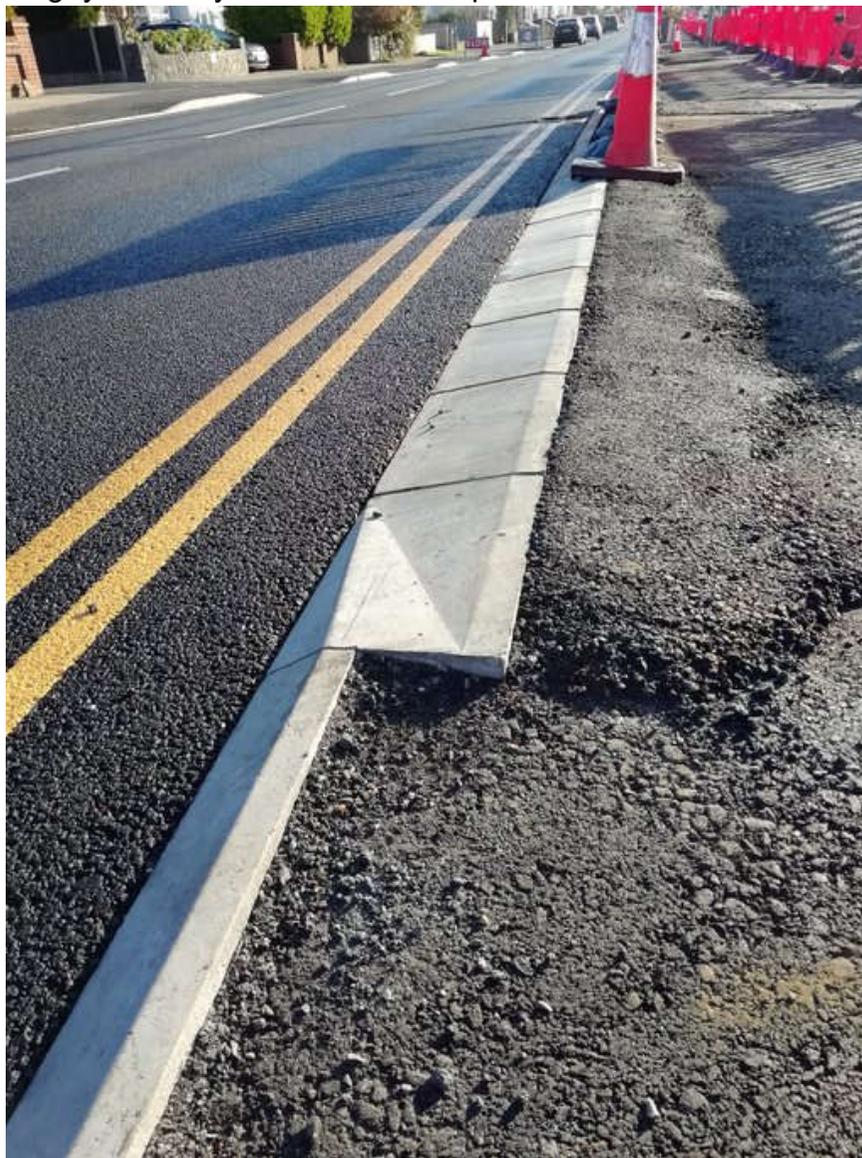
The currently preferred solution for creating crossing points between main roads and side roads where motor vehicle lanes need to cross active travel lanes is a 500mm deep kerb.

This allows the active travel route to continue and be flat without a dip, which is easier for both pedestrians (particularly mobility impaired) and also cyclists.

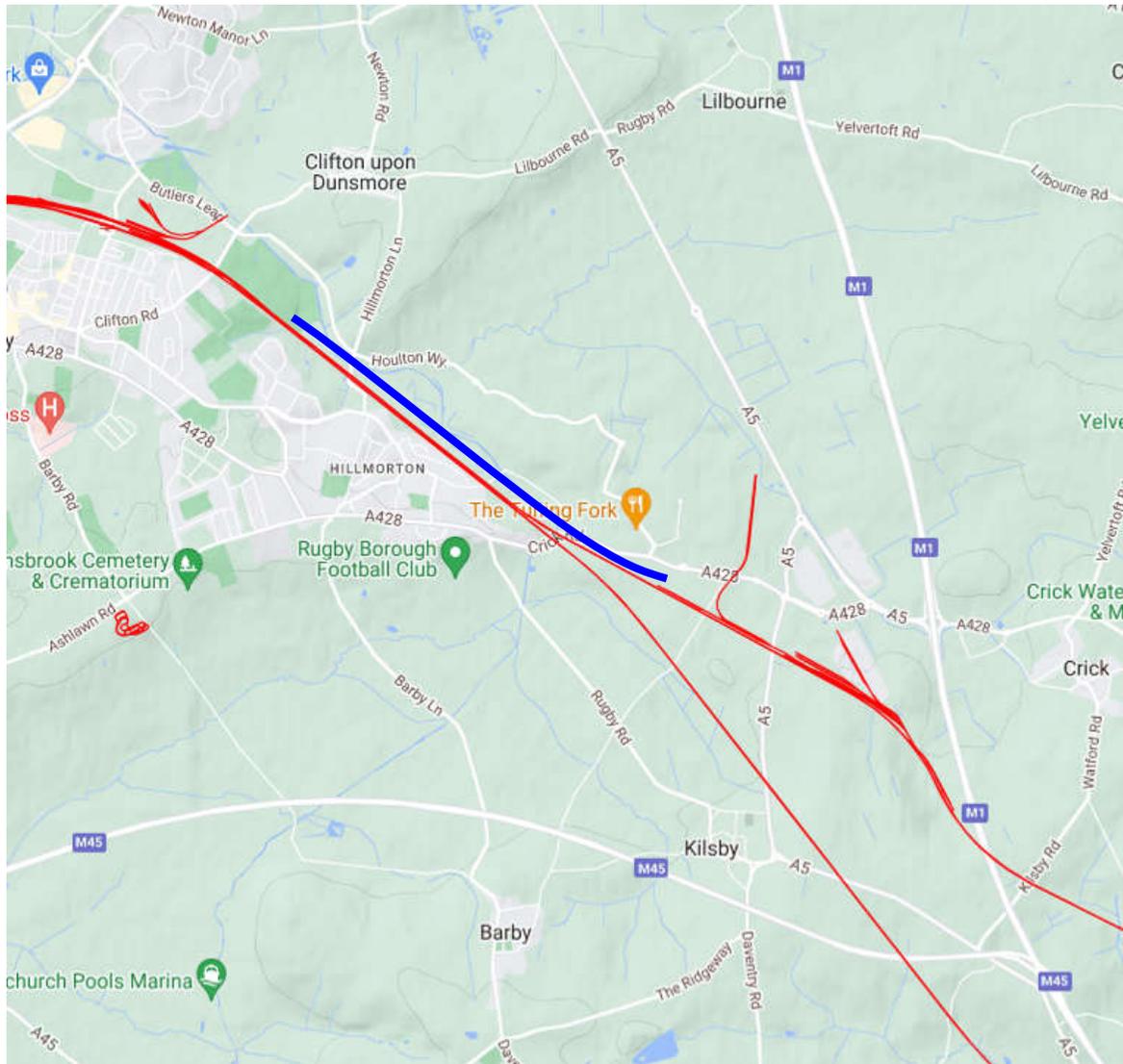
The height variation for motor vehicles provides a natural retardation in speed, and enforces the requirement for motor vehicles to give way.

This construction is now mandatory in Aberdeenshire.

<https://twitter.com/RantyHighwayman/status/1621180554950344707>



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Railfreight

DIRFT is a critical location for national railfreight, and maximising its capacity is essential for the entire UK to achieve its net-zero targets.

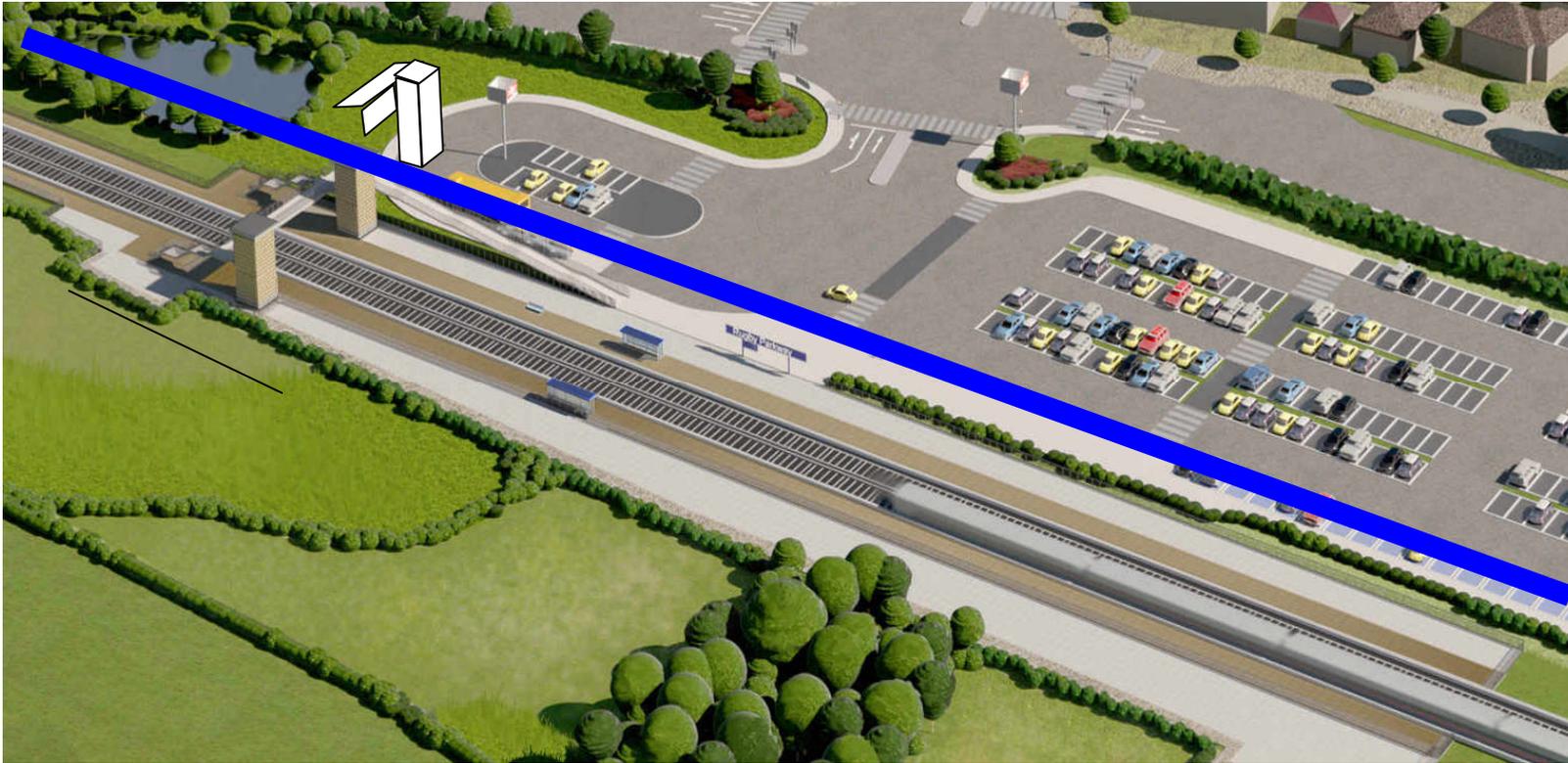
HS2 will release capacity on the 'fast' WCML lines through Rugby, but we can expect to see increased local capacity demands on the 'Northampton Loop' from both passenger services and also from increased railfreight at DIRFT and also the currently nearing completion Northampton Gateway.

Freight trains have to slow to a crawl to exit from the Northampton loop to enter DIRFT, with this junction clearance time being one of several capacity limiting factors.

To the south of DIRFT there is a tunnel under the M1, but to the north of DIRFT is open country. A likely future capacity enhancing measure would be to add a 3rd bi-directional line to the north of the two existing lines on the Northampton loop, allowing freight trains to exit/ join the main line closer to line speed and then slow down on this 3rd line to access / exit DIRFT.

(indicative position dark blue on diagram)

It would be prudent to at least consider this during the design of Rugby Parkway so that the station design did not make future provision prohibitively expensive.



For example, while no substantial structures are shown in the illustration, if there are any substantial structures it would be prudent to locate them sufficient distance north of the existing tracks to allow an additional 5m wide single track to be accommodated (as indicated in blue).

Furthermore it would be prudent future passive provision to configure the two lifts and bridge between them so that it is straightforward to continue the overbridge further north over an additional freight track, facilitating a future 3rd lift to provide access over an additional track.

i.e. simply locate the lifts to the side of the overbridge, not on the ends of it (as currently shown in render, but this design feature needs to be carried through to construction) (outlined in above diagram)

Platform seating / waiting areas

Some recent new stations have cost 10's of millions of £, and then skimmed a few hundred pounds on extremely limited levels of seating on platforms. Particularly for mobility impaired travellers, of which there are an increasing number as the population demographic ages, the ability to sit down on the platform is essential.

While the character of usage for this station is likely to be predominantly suburban in nature, consideration should be given to the likely waiting times experienced by passengers. A semi-open 'bus shelter' arrangement provides a poor passenger experience, so we would hope that a fully enclosed waiting area could be provided on each platform, e.g. such as provided at Berkswell station.

Lift Accessibility

It is assumed that to ensure accessibility at all times, the lifts will be remotely monitored by CCTV, so that the lifts will be available for use when the station is unstaffed. We seek clarification that this will be the arrangement (or how accessibility at all times will be facilitated)

Toilets

Clarification is sought whether it is planned for there to be public toilets at the station. This may be informed by the expected service frequency and hence maximum passenger wait time.

Station Name

Earlier proposals for this station could have seen a 4 platform arrangement with services to London on the WCML 'fast' lines. Since the station is to have platforms on the 'Northampton loop' only, while this provides direct services to Birmingham, the services to London are somewhat slower, so the function of the station may be more suburban in nature.

Given this usage, it has been suggested that "Rugby Houlton (for DIRFT)" may be more appropriate and not subject to confusion with mainline services at the main Rugby station.

Car park construction

The default car park construction method is to have a completely tarmac surface. This can be CO₂ intensive, and requires more drainage than a more porous surface.

It is essential that disabled parking bays are fully hard-surfaced, along with the route from disabled bay to platform, but we suggest consideration of more porous surfaces for other parts of the car park.

For example, the circulating road could be hard surfaced to reduce maintenance, but the parking bays themselves be gravel or grass (with reinforcing grids)

<https://www.multimatts.co.uk/ground-support-stabilisation/grass-car-parks/durapath-500mm-x-500mm-x-40mm>

This may be a 'greener' solution than a completely tarmac surface.



Parking demand management

In addition to providing 'carrots' in the form of good active travel provision to the station, consideration should be given to 'sticks', that discourage station users from driving to the station if they live within ready active travel distance (and are physically capable of active travel).

It is far easier to consider and implement these measures from the outset than trying to retro-fit them afterwards, which would be cause for considerable complaint from users.

We support making it easy and convenient for users to pay for parking, which ANPR as fitted to a range of station car parks in the West Midlands may facilitate. However making it convenient to pay for parking should not mean making it excessively cheap so that passengers driving to a station are subsidised to a greater degree than passengers using sustainable modes to travel to the station.

Clearly parking demand management needs careful design and consideration so that it is effective at its purpose, without being an excessive administrative burden. We would be happy to take part in discussion / workshop about how this might best be achieved.

Summary

In summary, we are very welcoming of this station proposal, but would seek further detailed design of the concept to maximise sustainable transport to the station itself.

In particular the active travel provision, especially into the DIRFT complex needs to be improved and fully integrated with station design if we are to see the maximum use of the station for travel to work purposes.

The current dire active travel provision into and across the DRIFT complex is so poor that it is also a major barrier for active travel from the nearby Houlton residential site, so active travel improvements should also be viewed through the lens of eliminating car journeys for travel to work from Houlton to DIRFT.

We highlight a new £200m active travel infrastructure funding pot that may be available to support funding of the active travel improvement components of the project <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-to-improve-walking-and-cycling-routes-and-boost-local-economies>

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any clarification any items mentioned in this consultation response, or to further explore potential design refinements. Railfuture West Midlands would be very happy to participate in any future stakeholder engagement to mature the design, whether that is part of the formal planning permission consultation process or other informal stakeholder engagement.