

Walsall Town Centre Interchange - Bradford Place - Future Improvements

Bradford Place bus interchange is located around Walsall's cenotaph adjacent to Bradford Street. There is no scope to enhance Bradford Place within its existing location due to the constraints of the surrounding buildings. Highway improvements and new shelters were introduced in 2011, which along with a Traffic Regulation Condition have made some improvements to the operation of the area.

Bradford Place is currently a public highway with a Traffic Regulation Condition (TRC) to regulate bus and taxi use in the area. Centro has agreed to manage the slot booking for the site and the maintenance of the shelters and information, but has no power to enforce the TRC; and it appears that neither the Police, nor Walsall Council have the resources to do so.

The current facility is at capacity with significant health and safety risks. As well as increasing capacity, a new site would resolve the considerable congestion issues on Bradford Street and Bradford Place which impacts on bus journey time reliability. Currently, this congestion undermines the significant investment that has already been made for quality bus services through the bus network review, and the £20m scheme to reduce traffic problems on the Walsall to Darlaston corridor, which many of the services from Bradford Place use.

There is no scope to enhance provision at Bradford Place itself. The site was improved with a new highway layout and infrastructure in September 2011, albeit improvements were constrained due to the location of the cenotaph, and taxi rank, both of which Walsall MBC do not wish to see relocated. The proposed relocation of bus services to a new facility would allow for this area to be turned into a safe pedestrian friendly area that complements the cenotaph.

The health and safety risks are significant as the current provision is oversubscribed and there is a lack of safe, attractive walking routes. The traffic and capacity issues are impeding the provision of high quality bus services by causing punctuality problems and restricting the enhancement of timetables. The shelters themselves, whilst of a high quality construction and appearance were required to be a cantilever style due to space which often provides little protection from the elements.

The 'main' entrance to Walsall Rail Station is through the Saddlers Shopping Centre which is not a 'best in class' station access exemplar for the West Midlands. In addition, the Centre closes at 5.30pm on weekdays / Saturdays and earlier on Sundays, after which, the back entrance has to be used which exits onto Station Street at the rear of the station.

This scheme proposes the relocation of bus facilities currently provided at Bradford Place. It is compatible with the wider strategy for interchange within Walsall Town Centre, the proposed Vision for Movement for Walsall, the Way-finding project already underway, and the Darlaston SDA. This scheme would allow for the provision of a larger, safe, DDA compliant facility that Centro could control.

Relocating the bus services to a new facility to the south west of the existing interchange would allow for future expansion, safer manoeuvring, improved journey times, and better

passenger facilities. This would then allow the existing area of Bradford Place to become a public space which complements the cenotaph. Walsall Council and Centro Officers have been examining options for which will meet these objectives.

In May 2013 Centro applied for funding from the Black Country LEP's Strategic Transport Board for a new interchange. This was part of the DfT's devolved major transport scheme funding. The bid was unsuccessful. In November 2013, LEPs were asked by the government to prepare a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for their area, and the scheme was submitted to be considered. Funding through the SEP was announced in July 2014 and the Interchange was not allocated.

There is currently no funding source identified for the project, however there may be potential for this scheme to be considered as part of future Black Country Growth Deal funding. This will be discussed with the Black Country Transport Officers Group to seek agreement on the way forward.

West Midlands ITA
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