

# Proof of Evidence

On behalf of  
Stop the West Midlands Interchange

## 6. TOURISM & LEISURE REPORT

In respect of the proposed West Midlands  
Interchange



# Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

## **SUMMARY OF OUR OBJECTIONS**

- NPSNN 5.158 - The visual effects on sensitive receptors such as local residents and other receptors such as visitors to the local area will far outweigh the benefits of this development.
- NPSNN 5.166, Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be developed unless the land is surplus to requirements.
- NPSNN 5.174, The proposal does not contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, it does not make effective use of land, it does not use natural resources prudently, it will not minimise waste or air pollution.
- The social objectives have been ignored or undervalued in the supporting documentation for the proposed development.
- The local area has a diverse and distinctive environment, which is highly valued by local residents and visitors to the area. It has numerous attractive villages and hamlets set in lovely countryside. It is also an area with open spaces and a wealth of habitats for wildlife, heathland, woodland, and waterways. There are a number of historical houses which are always popular with visitors.
- (South Staffs Tourism Strategy 2014-2017 - Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 2012) Tourism is the UK's fifth largest industry. The latest Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 2012 indicated that the total number of trips taken in South Staffordshire reached 2.3 million, generating an approximate spend of £103 million to the local economy. This equates to approximately £9 million being spent in the local economy each month. In terms of employment, the assessment also indicated that tourism supports approximately 2134 jobs

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- South Staffordshire acts as a green buffer to the densely populated conurbations of the Black Country and Birmingham. It is this unique village life that sets South Staffordshire apart from other destinations
- 80% of the district lies within the West Midlands Green Belt with the remaining to the north of the green belt boundary being defined as 'Open Countryside'. This rural district in the heart of England is a destination rich in history, heritage and rural splendour with a wealth of tourism opportunities for all to explore and enjoy. The district has an array of historic buildings and landscapes with over 850 listed buildings and structures, 19 conservation areas (including 16 village conservation areas) and 13 historic parklands (four of which are Grade II\* listed), many with influences from Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton. The western fringe of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) also lies within the District and is valued for its high landscape quality, wildlife and recreational value.

Tourism and Leisure - Introduction

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This evidence has been prepared by a local community group opposed to the West Midlands Interchange at Gailey, Four Ashes and Calf Heath in South Staffordshire. The community group was set up to represent the views of local residents. The group comprises of professional experts and local residents. It also has local political support from Gavin Williamson (South Staffordshire MP) and Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford MP).

‘Stop The West Midlands Interchange’ currently has over 2500 members from the neighbouring communities that will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development, these include the communities of Gailey, Four Ashes, Calf Heath, Hatherton, Penkridge, Brewwood & Coven.

We do not propose to repeat the objections made by the professional bodies, local authorities and political leaders we are merely seeking to offer a local perspective and provide our own views on this proposal, which is supported by evidence and professional experts.

This report focuses on the Tourism and Leisure that this development will affect at this location.

This report should be read in conjunction with the other reports being prepared by the Group on the following matters:-

- Planning and Green Belt;
- Railway Infrastructure;
- Highways;
- Health
- Environment & ecological issues;
- Agriculture;
- Location;
- Supporting Information; and
- Answers to the Inspector’s Questions.

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## **REPORT 6 TOURISM and LEISURE**

### **Introduction**

**1.0 NPSNN 5.158** - The Secretary of State will have to judge whether the visual effects on sensitive receptors, such as local residents, and other receptors, such as visitors to the local area, outweigh the benefits of the development.

1.1 It is transparently clear that the enjoyment of our leisure time spent in the open air and the ability to walk in the countryside is paramount for our mental and physical health and well-being. To lose our precious landscape would have a profound effect on us all and would be contrary to Government Planning Policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF states 'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. According to paragraph 8 of the NPPF achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

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a) **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

**1.2 NPSNN 5.166** - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be developed unless the land is surplus to requirements or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Applicants considering proposals, which would involve developing such land, should have regard to any local authority's assessment of need for such types of land and buildings.

**1.3 NPSNN 5.174** - The Secretary of State should not grant consent for development on existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, unless an assessment has been undertaken either by the local authority or independently, which has shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements, or the Secretary of State determines that the benefits of the project (including need) outweigh the potential loss of such facilities, taking into account any positive proposals made by the applicant to provide new, improved or compensatory land or facilities.

b) **A social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) **An environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising

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waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

1.4 This evidence focuses on the social objectives, which has been ignored or undervalued in the supporting documentation for the proposed development.

1.5 The local area has a diverse and distinctive environment, which is highly valued by local residents and visitors to the area. It has numerous attractive villages and hamlets set in lovely countryside. It is also an area with open spaces and a wealth of habitats for wildlife, heathland, woodland, and waterways. There are a number of historical houses which are always popular with visitors.

1.6 Nearby is Cannock Chase which was a Royal Forest, and is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Forest of Mercia also extends over this area. The natural environment is a key attraction for those living and visiting this, area. It also provides opportunities for leisure and recreation and offers a haven for wildlife, which also draws visitors to the area. This area of Greenbelt which is adjacent to the West Midlands conurbation, is necessary to ensure that everyone has easy access to the countryside, allowing walking, cycling, sailing and horse riding. Access to the countryside for quiet outdoor recreation is important to the nation's health and well-being especially at a time of rising health concerns over obesity and the need for people to be able to be more active.

1.7 People need local countryside which they can visit regularly without the need for polluting vehicles, and a poll found that over 80% of adults said that visiting the countryside was a vital counterbalance to the stresses of their daily life, giving peace and quiet while breathing fresh air in natural surroundings. Wolverhampton City Council, on their web site for promoting the area, show attractions in South Staffordshire for visiting, showing that the

1.8 Green Belt is needed without the need to travel long distances to find places to relax as a family.

The role of our fields, woods and hedgerows is fundamental to our wellbeing; they are nature's most precious air filters, protecting us from toxic pollutants in

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the atmosphere and storing harmful carbons.

1.9 Gailey is situated on a major crossroads that date back almost 2,000 years, and provides a gateway to two of the country's most beautiful counties, Staffordshire and Shropshire. A short distance along the A5 the impressive Telford bridge aqueduct carrying the Shropshire Union Canal straddles the road. Near to Gailey, which is situated on a Roman Road {Watling Street} various sites have been identified as having remnants of the Roman Empire and of course, The Staffordshire Hoard was discovered alongside this same road.

1.10 It is an area with historical connections also. Northcote Farm which was built around 1600 is reputed to have been the initial choice of refuge for Charles 11, but it was refused, so nearby Moseley Old Hall, with its Priest Hole, was used instead, on his escape after the battle of Worcester in 1651. This is now a National Trust property, and is a very popular place for tourists to visit. There are various other historic properties connected to Charles's journey, such as White Ladies Priory, Boscobel House { an English Heritage property}, where the Royal Oak Tree, reputed to have been where Charles 11 hid, can be seen and Chillington Hall which was near to the route he took as he came to Moseley Old Hall. He also passed through the village of Coven Heath. Other historic places popular with visitors are Shugborough Hall, and Weston Park, a Grade 1 Listed Stately Home Built in 1671, which hold various events throughout the year such as a Game Fair, the V Festival, and has hosted the G8 Summit and the Irish Peace Talks. As well as beautiful gardens, architecture and history, the House and Stables are available for meetings, team building events, corporate hospitality, weddings, product launches, private parties, conferences, family fun and activity days, in the adventure playground, and it also has Caravan Rallies during the summer months, so is ideal for families.

1.11 Penkridge holds traditional markets twice a week and on Bank Holidays. Regular Farmer's Markets are also held as well as Auctions. The visitors come from a wide area, and coach operators run special trips to the Market. Penkridge is an interesting village for visitors also. There is a Heritage Centre and there is the Old Gaol and Stocks to be seen.

1.12 Gailey was mentioned in the Domesday Book, as well as Penkridge of



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which it is part, and which, due to its geographical position is ideal for residents and visitors to access the many sporting and leisure activities in this part of South Staffordshire.

1.13 In addition to the above, the proposed development area provides so much for so many people and is a leisure / sporting destination, as detailed below.

Within the development area there are a number of tourism and sporting / leisure activities.

- **Worcestershire and Staffordshire Canal**

The Worcestershire and Staffordshire Canal is located within the development area. This canal route is popular with permanent and tourist boaters, as well as fisherman.

There are number of permanent boaters in Gailey and very successful holiday narrow boat company. Tourists are attracted to Gailey because of its attractiveness and peace and tranquillity. This will be lost if the proposed scheme is approved.

- **Tourer Caravan Site, Wharf Lane, Gailey**

There is a popular caravan site located within the development area. As with above, tourists are attracted to this area because the area to Gailey because of its attractiveness and peace and tranquillity. This will be lost if the proposed scheme is approved.

- **Greensforge sailing club, Gailey.**

Green Forge Sailing Club at Gailey is also a RYA Training Centre, and they have courses which introduce people to the basics of the sport, then stay

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involved and improve their skills. The Sea Scouts from surrounding areas {including Wolverhampton} use Gailey Reservoir.

The club is committed to bringing sailing to the local community and encourage members to participate in the sport of dingy racing. Promoting their peaceful setting at Calf Heath reservoir.

### **Gailey Lea Reservoir / Calf Heath Reservoir**



West Midlands Bird Club uses Gailey Reservoir, and there are various walking routes which go around the different stretches of water in the area, including the canal.

- **Gailey Trout Fishery - one of the oldest in the Midlands**

South Staffs Sailing Club puts training as one of its main priorities and is a Registered RYA Training Centre, and RYA Champion Club. They have free Sailing and Practice, and particularly encourage children to learn and improve their skills, and some juniors have gone on to achieve excellent results in both local and national competitions. They also cater for disabled children and adults, on Gailey lower pool.

- **Blackfords progressive angling society, Gailey.**

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The jewel in the clubs crown, Calf Heath is a mature, picturesque reservoir which was constructed in the 1700s, around 19 acres in size. There are 80 well-constructed pegs, providing a secure platform from which to fish.



- **Gailey canoe club, Croft Lane, Gailey**



Gailey Canoe Club which is situated by the canal at Gailey is a marathon and sprint racing club which caters for all ages, and gives training.

The canoe club provides fantastic sporting facilities for ages 8 and upwards in a scenic, peaceful and rural setting. Training times (on the water) Tuesday and Thursday 6.30-8.30pm, Sunday 10.30-12.30. There is a National Marathon canoeing competition called the Hasler Series, which runs through our canal network once or twice a year with Gailey Marina used a major stage.

- **Gailey wharf, Gailey**

Set off from Gailey Marina and choose one of five excellent routes, each providing 7 nights of leisure activities. A relaxing time away on a fantastic voyage of discovery along the wonderfully rural Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal and beyond.

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- **Roundhouse Gailey.**

Where the Staffs and Worcester canal crosses the Watling Street, stands the Round House, one of the most curious buildings in Gailey, adjacent to the Marins where Canal Cruises can be booked. It is possible to travel throughout the Midlands by narrowboat and the canal attracts many visitors, walkers and cyclists who can use the towpath.



The Roundhouse is a Grade II listed building, which is located within the development area and immediately adjacent to the canal. The Roundhouse comprises of a shop, which opens between March –October, and a residential unit.



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- **Gailey church, Gailey** Now home to a thriving pottery business, thoughtfully restored, breathing new life into this iconic building built in 1849.

- **Gailey Pottery** is situated in the unique setting of the previously redundant Christ Church at one of most famous cross roads in South Staffordshire, and is popular with visitors.



A short cast iron canal aqueduct between Stretton and Brewood and near to Belvide Reservoir. Designed by Thomas Telford and bearing his name and date of construction 1832. It carries the Shropshire Union Canal 30 feet above the A5 at a skewed angle,

- **Public rights of way and Bridleway**

There are numerous ancient bridleways and footpaths within the development zone.

The four-mile circular from four ashes to Gailey via the A449 onto the public rights of way (Penkridge 29) and then the canal towpath is a lovely walk where nature abounds.

Terry Rhodes of Rambling Ramblers. "After spending time talking to Four Ashes Limited at their second stage consultations, I was told that the public right of way (Penkridge 29) will be gone and there will be no

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alternative path to replace it. When I said that this is an ancient public right of way, they then responded with, that matters not.”

The Water Eaton enclosure award of 1813 (1799 Act of parliament) created a public Bridleway (called I). It commences on vicarage road, goes beside the canal and then cuts across the fields at four ashes to connect with Gravelley way. The Bridleway is not on Staffordshire’s definitive public rights of way list however, it has not been extinguished.



**1.4 NPSNN 5.184** - Public rights of way, National Trails, and other rights of access to land (e.g. open access land) are important recreational facilities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Applicants are expected to take appropriate mitigation measures to address adverse effects on coastal access, National Trails, other public rights of way and open access land and, where appropriate, to consider what opportunities there may be to improve access. In considering revisions to an existing right of way consideration needs to be given to the use, character, attractiveness and convenience of the right of way. The Secretary of State should consider whether the mitigation measures put forward by an applicant are acceptable and whether requirements in respect of these measures might be attached to any grant of development consent.

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## **2.0 Local attractions/activities**

### **Within 1 mile**

- Otherton airfield, considered an active airfield by the civil aviation authority with 50+ pilots flying from the airfield.
- Rodbaston Agricultural College, Animal Zone and Equestrian Centre
- Rodbaston Agricultural College promotes itself as being in the countryside and attracts students wishing to study Countryside Management, and related subjects. It also has Horse Shows and other events throughout the year. It also has links to the Wild Life Trust, National Trust, and South Staffs Canal and Rivers Trust. There is also a Visitor Centre, with an Animal Zone with 750 animals, and outdoor activities, making it an ideal venue for families to enjoy a family day out. The College take students from the age of 14. They have a wide range of courses in diverse subjects, so attract many boys and girls who wish to go to University or become Apprentices to get directly into work. Students travel to College from a wide area.
- Rodbaston Hall is also a venue for weddings and conferences.
- There are 2 busy garden centres, Dobbies and Pipers, Roman ruins and a site of Specific Scientific interest.
- Time trial cycling also takes place on the A5.

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- There is a Heronry at Gailey.

### **3.0 Within two miles**

- Brewood and Coven villages, two conservation areas and often described as one of the jewels in the crown of south Staffordshire and popular tourist attraction.
- The swamp, a public open space in the market town of Penkridge. Vibrant markets also take place every Wednesday and Saturday in Penkridge, attracting locals and tourists to the area.
- Somerford hall, 18th century palladium style mansion, exclusive wedding venue, grade II listed building.
- The Three Hammers Golf Club is one of several in the area, which provide visitors with exercise and fresh air, as well as a place to eat. There are several other restaurants locally .

### **4.0 Within 5 miles.**

- Discovery trails, self-guided walks-40 trails to choose from.
- Moseley Old Hall, historic house, Elizabethan farmhouse that hid Charles II in 1651.
- Hollybush Garden Centre a complete day out for all of the family. Aquaria, ponds, restaurant, shops, miniature railway.
- Wheaton Aston village, quaint, picturesque and very traditional.



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- Lower Drayton Farm, family fun, farm adventure, paint balling, clay pigeon shooting and much more.
- Chillington Hall -, historic house, built during the 18th century, available for weddings, receptions and corporate entertainment.
- Shoal Hill Common, 73 hectares of lowland heath and woodland.
- Boscobel House and the Royal Oak, historic house, saved Charles II after the defeat at the battle of Worcester in 1651.

There are many pubs and restaurants within a 5-mile radius and there is beautiful St Michaels Church in Penkridge, which is a Grade I, listed building.



### Cannock Chase (AONB)



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Cannock Chase Forest boasting 4 walking trails, 4 cycling trails, GO Ape, forest Segway, orienteering, dog activity trail, play areas, BBQ areas, picnic areas, bike hire, café & dog friendly. Cannock Chase was a Royal Forest and the Forest of Mercia also extends over this area. The natural environment is a key attraction for those living and visiting this area, it also provides opportunities for leisure and recreation and offers a haven for wildlife, which draws visitors to the area. This area of Greenbelt that is adjacent to the West Midlands conurbation is necessary to ensure that everyone has access to the countryside.

### 5.0 Within 8 miles.

- RAF Cosford – Museum and the annual air show. With free admission, the R.A.F Museum at Cosford makes an interesting day out for families. It houses 70 aircraft, which have been restored, and includes planes used during the war. It is also home to War Planes, Missiles, and Transport and Research Development Collections. The National Cold War Museum gives visitors a chance to see what life was like behind the Iron Curtain.
- Weston Park, 17th century mansion, wedding venue, with fine art gallery, 1,000 acres of park and landscape, restaurant, café/delicatessen. It holds many events including the very popular V-Fest, horse trials,
- White Lady's priory, Ruins of the late 17th century church of a small nunnery. Believed to be haunted and a popular visitors attraction.
- Halfpenny Green has an airfield where it is possible to get training for flying planes, helicopters, and microlights. It also has one of the country's largest vineyards, where, as well as the wine tasting and restaurant, there is a mix of gift shops, making it a good place to visit

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## 6. Conclusion

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**(South Staffs Tourism Strategy 2014-2017 - Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 2012)** Tourism is the UK's fifth largest industry. The latest Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 2012 indicated that the total number of trips taken in South Staffordshire reached 2.3 million, generating an approximate spend of £103 million to the local economy. This equates to approximately £9 million being spent in the local economy each month. In terms of employment, the assessment also indicated that tourism supports approximately 2134 jobs. South Staffordshire acts as a green buffer to the densely populated conurbations of the Black Country and Birmingham. It is this unique village life that sets South Staffordshire apart from other destinations.

80% of the district lies within the West Midlands Green Belt with the remaining to the north of the green belt boundary being defined as 'Open Countryside'. This rural district in the heart of England is a destination rich in history, heritage and rural splendour with a wealth of tourism opportunities for all to explore and enjoy. The district has an array of historic buildings and landscapes

With over 850 listed buildings and structures, 19 conservation areas (including 16 village conservation areas) and 13 historic parklands (four of which are Grade II\* listed), many with influences from Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton. The western fringe of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) also lies within the District and is valued for its high landscape quality, wildlife and recreational value.

Not only does tourism contribute to the wealth of the economy, tourism also enhances and promotes good physical and mental health of our residents and visitors. (*Tourism Strategy 2014-2017, 2017*)

South Staffordshire, a beautiful place to live, where tourism, leisure and sporting facilities should be allowed to thrive.

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## **References**

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