

Safeguarding of Land for Nuneaton Parkway

Background and Context

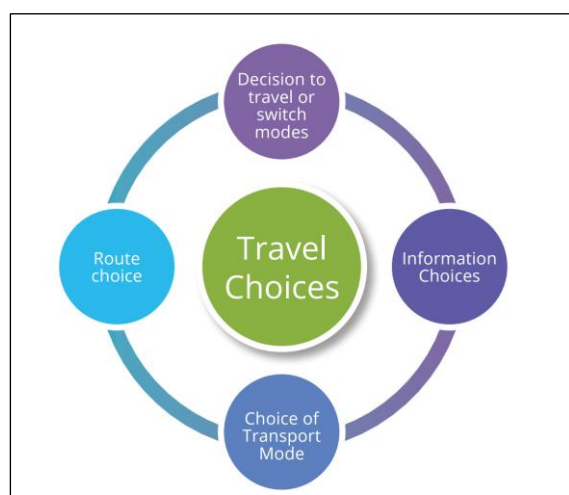
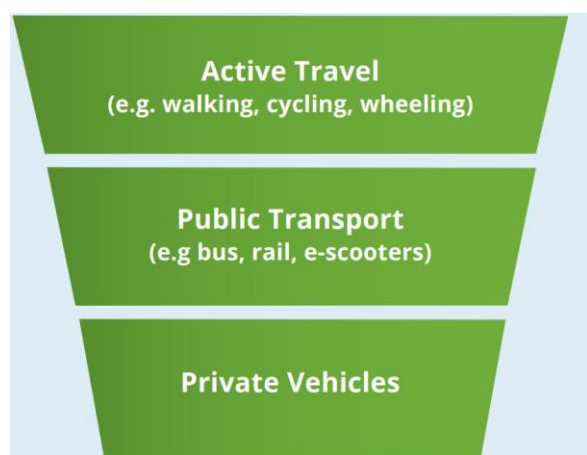
Warwickshire County Council has identified the need for a new heavy rail station known as Nuneaton Parkway, which would be located approximately mid-way between the existing stations of Nuneaton and Hinckley on the Birmingham to Leicester line. The opportunity to develop Nuneaton Parkway station would be a major investment in transport infrastructure in the Nuneaton/Hinckley area, providing a new opportunity to access the rail network, supporting wider housing and job growth and contributing to the delivery of a Carbon Net Zero transport network. It would simultaneously maximise the benefits for Warwickshire (and in the adjoining area of Leicestershire) from key regional infrastructure schemes which are in the process of being developed by Midlands Connect, such as Midlands Rail Hub and improved Coventry – Leicester/Nottingham direct rail connectivity.

The opportunity to deliver a new rail station here is crucial to the future transport strategy of the area, therefore the County Council requests that Rugby Borough Council and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council take the appropriate steps in the development of their Local Plan to safeguard the land that will facilitate the opportunity for Nuneaton Parkway to be delivered in the future.

Policy Context

Local Policy

The delivery of a Nuneaton Parkway station will help deliver a number of Warwickshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) policies and strategies set out by the County Council. The scheme will support the overarching LTP themes of Environment, Well-being, Place and Economy, facilitate the delivery of the sustainable transport hierarchy and provide the opportunity for people to make travel choice to switch to rail, helping achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2050.



The delivery of Nuneaton Parkway station will support the delivery of LTP Key Policies 2 and 3 and the delivery of the wider Public Transport Strategy and core Rail Strategy policies.

KP2 - Transport interventions which align with our Council Vision, government policy and as many of our four key strategy themes as possible

All policies and interventions will deliver benefits for the environment, wellbeing, place and/or economy. They will be designed to facilitate the right jobs, training, future skills, education, infrastructure and places. We will ensure that communities and individuals are supported to live safely, healthily, happily and independently. We want Warwickshire to be a prime example of a sustainable, net zero county.

KP3 - Decarbonising transport and transport related infrastructure

Transport contributes a greater proportion of carbon emissions than any other sector. WCC will pursue actions and objectives that seek to reduce pollution in general, and carbon emissions in particular, through a range of interventions. Car dependency will be discouraged, where suitable, in favour of more sustainable travel choices. We will consider the carbon cost of our activities on a cradle to grave basis, including new and improved transport infrastructure, such as roads, rail and bridges.



Public Transport

To promote the use of public transport instead of private vehicles for medium and long journeys, where it is possible to supply the necessary infrastructure.

- Bus
- Rail
- Very Light Rail (eg trams)
- E-scooters
- Informal car sharing
- Car clubs – organised, formal car sharing facilities

Warwickshire Rail Strategy Policies.

Policy WRS1: Partnership.

The County Council will seek to engage and work with key partners to deliver improved rail services and facilities in Warwickshire.

Delivery of Warwickshire's rail aspirations will require the support of the wider rail industry, including Network Rail, TOCs, WMRE and DfT, along with key organisations such as Midlands Connect. Warwickshire will continue to engage with a wide range of partners to influence rail investment and service plans.

Policy WRS3: New rail services and stations

The County Council will develop proposals for new rail services and stations and work with partners to secure their delivery.

National Policy

The realisation of Nuneaton Parkway station will contribute to the overall delivery of the Government's overall Key Missions, of particular relevance are helping to kickstart economic growth and breaking down barriers to opportunities.

In addition, Nuneaton Parkway supports the national policy direction to achieve Net Zero by 2050 (Net Zero Strategy, 2021), it specifically supports the following priority outcomes set out in the DfT Outcome Delivery Plan:

1. Improve connectivity across the UK and grow the economy by enhancing the transport network, on time and on budget.
2. Build confidence in the transport network as the country recovers from Covid-19 and improve transport users' experience, ensuring that the network is safe, reliable, and inclusive.
3. Tackle climate change and improve air quality by decarbonising transport.

The transportation sector makes a substantial contribution to CO₂ emissions due to the high level of use of diesel and petrol vehicles. The delivery of the new station with its strategic access from the A5 trunk road will give people the choice to transfer from road to rail for some trips, which will support the share of trips taken via sustainable modes, one of the key transport commitments set out in the Government's Net Zero Strategy 2021.

The National Transport Strategy will be published in 2025 and it is envisaged that new rail facilities such as Nuneaton Parkway will support the toolkit of measures to help achieve the governments wider objectives and the path to net zero.

Regional Policy

Midlands Connect

Midlands Connect is the Sub-National Transport Body for the pan-Midlands area, responsible for identifying and developing the strategic road and rail investment priorities which are needed across the East and West Midlands. At the core of these significant infrastructure schemes are the proposals for the Midlands Rail Hub and the provision of direct rail connectivity between Coventry and Leicester/Nottingham. Nuneaton Parkway will enable Warwickshire (and parts of South West Leicestershire) to fully realise the benefits and opportunities these infrastructure schemes will bring.

Coventry to Leicester/Nottingham

Midlands Connect is developing the business case for a direct train service to link Coventry with Leicester and Nottingham. The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) submission to the Department for Transport is planned for 2025. A journey between these cities by rail is currently indirect and time-consuming, requiring at least one change of train. There are two options for delivering this scheme, either via or avoiding Nuneaton train station, with the latter potentially including a stop at Nuneaton Parkway instead.

Midlands Rail Hub

The proposals for the Midlands Rail Hub (MRH) will provide a significant uplift in rail capacity and improve transport links between the East and West Midlands. It is planned that if Midlands Rail Hub is delivered in full, the scheme will deliver two additional trains between Birmingham and Leicester, bringing the total number of services on this route to four trains per hour. These could call at Nuneaton Parkway.

The Role of Nuneaton Parkway and Midlands Connect

Midlands Connect have identified that Nuneaton Parkway could have a strategic role if either or both of the business cases set out above are progressed to delivery. It would be especially relevant if the Coventry – Leicester/Nottingham scheme is delivered utilising the option to bypass Nuneaton station, allowing a call in the wider Nuneaton/Hinckley area and thereby delivering the associated benefits of this scheme for Warwickshire and the broader sub-region.

Midlands Connect have identified Nuneaton Parkway as a priority scheme in their recent Strategic Park and Ride study and concluded that the station (along with improved services) is likely to help intercept vehicle trips from the Strategic Road Network and thereby contribute to a reduction in car mileage/carbon and town/city centre congestion. In addition, vehicle drivers would be better served accessing public transport from an access point directly from the A5 than attempting to access these services at a town centre station, thereby further reducing the impact of the car on town centres. This could also be the case for some users of Hinckley station.

West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE)

The delivery of Nuneaton Parkway will support the wider objectives set out the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) Rail Investment Strategy, specifically objectives 1,2 and 6 as set out in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: WMRE Rail Investment Strategy Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective		Desired outcomes
1	To support the recovery from Covid-19	Recovery of passenger volumes to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible
2	To contribute to net zero	Modal shift from road to rail and a rolling programme of electrification
3	To deliver Midlands Rail Hub	Our key transport project that delivers improved connectivity across the region
4	To maximise the benefits of HS2 to the West Midlands	Improving access to HS2 from across the region and improving HS2 service offer
5	To develop high growth corridors whilst reducing social deprivation and levelling up	A train service on each corridor that matches demand whilst also providing access to jobs and education
6	To maximise access to the rail network	A network that is easy to use for all people, inclusively
7	To support the movement of goods by rail	A network that has the capacity and flexibility to carry more freight
8	To consider radical change in the long term	A plan that can be developed with industry support for the network needed in the 2050s

In addition, Nuneaton Parkway station is specifically mentioned in the Rail Investment Strategy for delivery between 2031 and 2040, further enhancing the opportunities to access the rail network along the Water Orton corridor.

Progress to Date

The County Council has undertaken a high-level feasibility study to ascertain if the station is likely to have a positive Business Case. A range of site options have been identified where the station could be located, this approach has included an assessment of the 'long' list of sites to determine a preferred location. Further work on this preferred location to look in detail at key issues and access arrangements was subsequently carried out. A brief overview of this work is set out below.

High Level Benefits

The initial feasibility work undertaken by the County Council has indicated that Nuneaton Parkway is likely to have a positive Business Case, albeit more detailed work is required to fully consider construction, operational costs and wider economic benefits.

At the feasibility stage, a range of service modelling scenarios, from 1 to 4 trains per hour have been tested and were based on an indicative site location along the route. These scenarios are set out in Table 2 below and include services that would be delivered via the Midlands Connect led schemes; Midlands Rail Hub and Coventry – Leicester/Nottingham.

Table 2: Nuneaton Parkway modelled service specifications.

Number of Services calling at Nuneaton Parkway	Service
1 train per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham – Leicester service
4 trains per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham New Street to Leicester Service (1tph) • Birmingham New Street to Stansted Airport Service (1tph) • Coventry to Leicester/Nottingham Service (2tph)
2 trains per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham New Street to Leicester Service (1tph) • Birmingham New Street to Stansted Airport Service (1tph)
2 trains per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham New Street to Leicester Service (1tph) • Coventry to Leicester/Nottingham Service (1tph)

Key points to note from this work include:

- All scenarios suggest that as a strategic P&R station, Nuneaton Parkway would attract road users in this location and potentially reduce car journeys into key urban centres. At this stage the highway impacts (positive and negative) on the A5 have not been assessed in detail.
- A service pattern of 1tph does not appear to be viable for the development of a robust, positive business case.
- A service pattern of 2tph to Birmingham produced better benefits than 1tph to Birmingham and 1tph to Coventry, suggesting frequency of service is more important than range of destinations; more detailed modelling would need to be undertaken to confirm this.
- 4tph has the strongest business case at present and is most likely to support a positive BCR once other costs are taken into account.
- The existing stations at Nuneaton and Hinckley are well used with little capacity for further growth. Accessing and using these stations can prove challenging at peak times. Nuneaton Parkway will facilitate some passenger abstraction from these stations, a level of which may be regarded as positive as it will enable the rail corridor as a whole to grow. This is important in the context of overall housing and employment growth in the Nuneaton/Hinckley area, which is significant. Further analysis and discussions with stakeholders will be required to explore this issue further.
- It should be noted that substantial housing growth around Nuneaton/Hinckley and in the wider A5 corridor will occur during the next Local Plan period and the provision of good quality public transport infrastructure will help to accommodate growth in trip making in a sustainable way. The provision of improved, easy access points to the rail network and better connectivity to a range of destinations will be key for new residents and those seeking employment in the area.

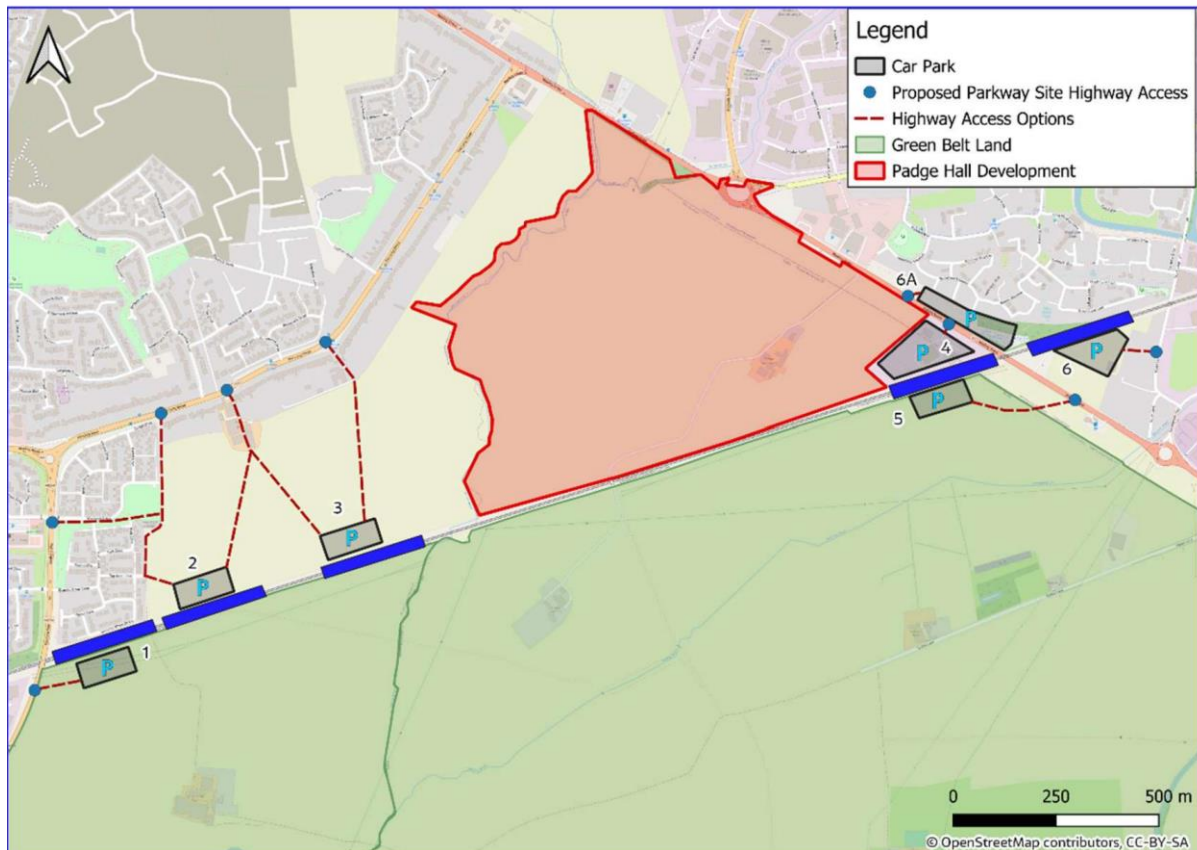
The positive high-level benefits for three of the four service scenarios set out above is indicative that there is a strong case for Nuneaton Parkway to be progressed, ultimately with the production of an Outline and Full Business Case in line with HM Treasury guidelines to help secure funding. This next phase of development work on the scheme will take a substantial amount of time and is dependent on available revenue funding to enable this work to be completed.

Given the significant development pressure on land in this area and the timing of the relevant Local Plan reviews, it would appear timely to request that the identified site for Nuneaton Parkway be safeguarded through the Local Plan process to ensure that the opportunity to deliver this key public transport facility is not lost. Work has been undertaken to look at a range of potentially suitable sites, with one specific area identified for safeguarding. An overview of this work and site identification is set out below.

Nuneaton Parkway - Site Location & Access

A range of locations for the station and associated car parking and station facilities along the railway line between Nuneaton and Hinckley have been identified and assessed for their suitability to site a parkway station. The locations considered are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1; Locations considered for Nuneaton Parkway station.



The most recent work to refine site selection took place in 2023 and utilised previous work that incorporated a comprehensive site selection process which developed a set of criteria that incorporated rail industry and planning criteria and took into account wider policy objectives and transport impacts. Key themes included were:

- Policy Fit;
- Strategic;
- Engineering / Deliverability;
- Transport Impacts;
- Safety;
- Environmental;
- Managerial;
- Financial / Economic;
- Development Impacts; and
- Commercial.

The work concluded that the majority of the sites had specific 'showstopper' issues that would be difficult to mitigate against to either produce a positive business case or actually deliver the anticipated wider highway impacts. In some cases, the land identified for a site was no longer available due to significant development pressure along the A5 corridor, specifically on adjacent land at Padge Hall Farm.

The multi-criteria assessment concluded that 'Option 2' and 'Option 5' could both be taken forward for further consideration. Following a subsequent analysis by the County

Council, Option 2 was discounted due to access and highway impact issues, proximity to Nuneaton town station and development pressure in the immediate vicinity.

Therefore, it was concluded that 'Option 5' (A5 Watling Street West) with a new access from the A5 would be taken forward for further site analysis to ensure that any identified issues could be mitigated. This was based on high level engineering analysis and judgement and explored the following for the preferred site:

- Highway/land boundary confirmation;
- Review of key utilities falling within the site;
- Review of flood mapping data;
- Access arrangements; and
- Other issues, including proximity to a proposed westbound freight loop on the Birmingham to Leicester line to support the delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub service improvements.

This work has concluded that the preferred location is suitable to construct a station. It is recognised that some flood risk issues and impact on utilities will need to be considered in the next phase of work, but that this is likely to be minimal and should be easily mitigated during site design and construction. The land for the station in this location is at a broadly similar level to the rail track which would be economically advantageous for the scheme in construction terms. More detailed location information regarding the extent of the land required is set out in Figure 3.

Access to the site

Access arrangements to the site have been considered in terms of:

- An access point via an additional arm from the A5 Sketchley roundabout; and
- A new direct access from the A5 – however there were concerns for achieving this given the proximity of the low railway bridge and its impact on visibility.

Figure 2: Potential access points for Nuneaton Parkway from A5



Options for access have been considered and preliminary designs have been produced in accordance with standards contained in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). These include:

- Option A – Adding an arm to the existing A5 Sketchley roundabout to allow access to the development;
- Option B – Delivery of a new ghost island junction on the A5; and
- Option C – Provision of a new ‘left-in left-out’ junction on the A5.

Options have been assessed against a multi-criteria framework to help determine appropriate interventions. It has been concluded that all options should be taken forward to the next stage of work, where specific consideration will need to be given to the deliverability of the access (including identified flooding issues and utilities), cost of delivery and acceptability to National Highways as the Highway Authority for the A5. It should be noted that Option A could facilitate the existing Petrol filling station north of the Sketchley roundabout to be served from the new station access road, thereby allowing its existing access to/from the A5 to be closed. This opportunity will be explored as part of the next phase of feasibility work.

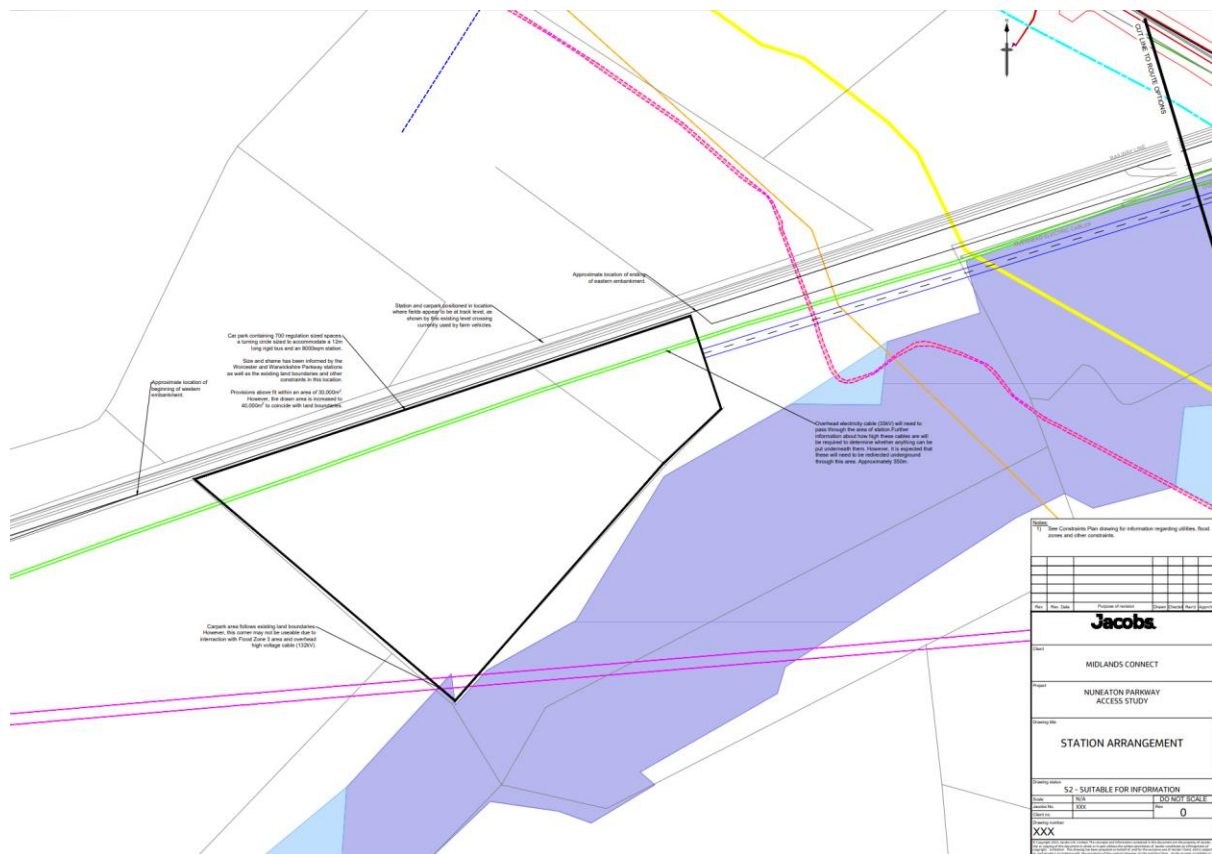
Extent of Land Required

To enable the delivery of a heavy rail station that has the capacity to act as a strategic Park & Ride, cater for local trips and provide a high class multi-modal interchange, it is essential that the overall site is adequate in size. The County Council is of the opinion that the site needs to have adequate capacity to accommodate the following:

- Long and short stay vehicle parking including an appropriate level of disabled provision;
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure;
- High quality, secure cycle storage;
- Signalling etc facilities;
- Station related passenger facilities and services;
- Taxi rank; and
- Adequate bus interchange facility (including a turning circle for a 12m long vehicle) with high quality passenger waiting facilities.

The station location has been positioned in such a way to minimise cost, disruption and takes into account external factors such as utilities and flood risk. The resulting ‘station area’ is shown in Figure 3 below and is approximately 40,000m² in size to give flexibility around the exact location and service provision.

Figure 3: Extent of land required for the Nuneaton Parkway station



It is recommended that the land shown in Figure 4 overleaf is safeguarded within the RBC and HBBC Local Plans to accommodate location refinement and enable suitable access provision from the A5.

Figure 4: Extent of Land required for safeguarding



Green Belt Considerations

The identified site for the station falls within land currently designated as Green Belt. The County Council is aware that any development located in the Green Belt will need to be carefully considered by the Local Authority responsible for planning. However, the National Planning Framework does include the following clause:

155. *Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*

(c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location

The County Council is confident that the work to identify a suitable site for the station indicates that the identified preferred site is the only real option in terms of land available, wider development pressure, access to the railway, good access from the highway network and likely to be suitable from a rail engineering perspective. Any known issues (primarily related to flooding and utilities) in the preferred location are likely to be mitigated against during detailed design and construction. This will be further explored in greater detail during the next phase of work.

Wider Stakeholder Support and Engagement

The County Council has engaged with a range of stakeholders in order to provide an overview of the proposal for Nuneaton Parkway, the potential benefits of the scheme and to highlight additional work that would be needed to develop the scheme proposals further in line with rail industry and HM Treasury requirements.

The table below provides an overview of key stakeholders that the County Council has engaged with to date and a summary of their views on the proposal.

Table 3: Stakeholder Views on Nuneaton Parkway

Organisation	View of Organisation
West Midlands Rail Executive	Supportive of the indicative scheme. Nuneaton Parkway is included in the WMRE Rail Investment Strategy with a planned delivery timeframe post-2031.
Midlands Connect	The feasibility work on the scheme to date has been undertaken in collaboration with Midlands Connect. They are supportive of the scheme and acknowledge the station could have a key role in their future Midlands Rail Hub scheme and/or the Coventry – Leicester/Nottingham direct connectivity scheme, as well as a broader role as a Strategic Park and Ride facility for the region.
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council	Initial engagement with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council officers has been positive and they have offered support for the concept of Nuneaton Parkway.

Rugby Borough Council	Initial engagement with Rugby Borough Council officers has been positive and they have offered support for the concept of Nuneaton Parkway.
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Initial engagement with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council officers has been positive and they have offered support for the concept of Nuneaton Parkway. They have noted that the new station could provide existing and future residents of the Borough with access to the wider rail network given the constraints of Hinckley station (access and parking).
Leicestershire County Council	Leicestershire County Council officers are aware of the scheme through their involvement in Midlands Connect. Initial engagement with them has been generally positive, with the key areas of interest relating primarily to potential abstraction from Hinckley and impacts on service stopping patterns.
National Highways	Future engagement with National Highways is required regarding access to the site, the impact of the station on traffic levels on the A5, and how the station proposal could be integrated into any future upgrade of the A5 in this area under consideration for potential delivery in RIS4 (post-2030).

Next Steps and Programme of Work

The County Council will undertake a refresh of the high-level business case viability before carrying out a more significant piece of work to produce a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the scheme. It is anticipated that this update along with the work to develop the SOBC will be undertaken in 2026/27.