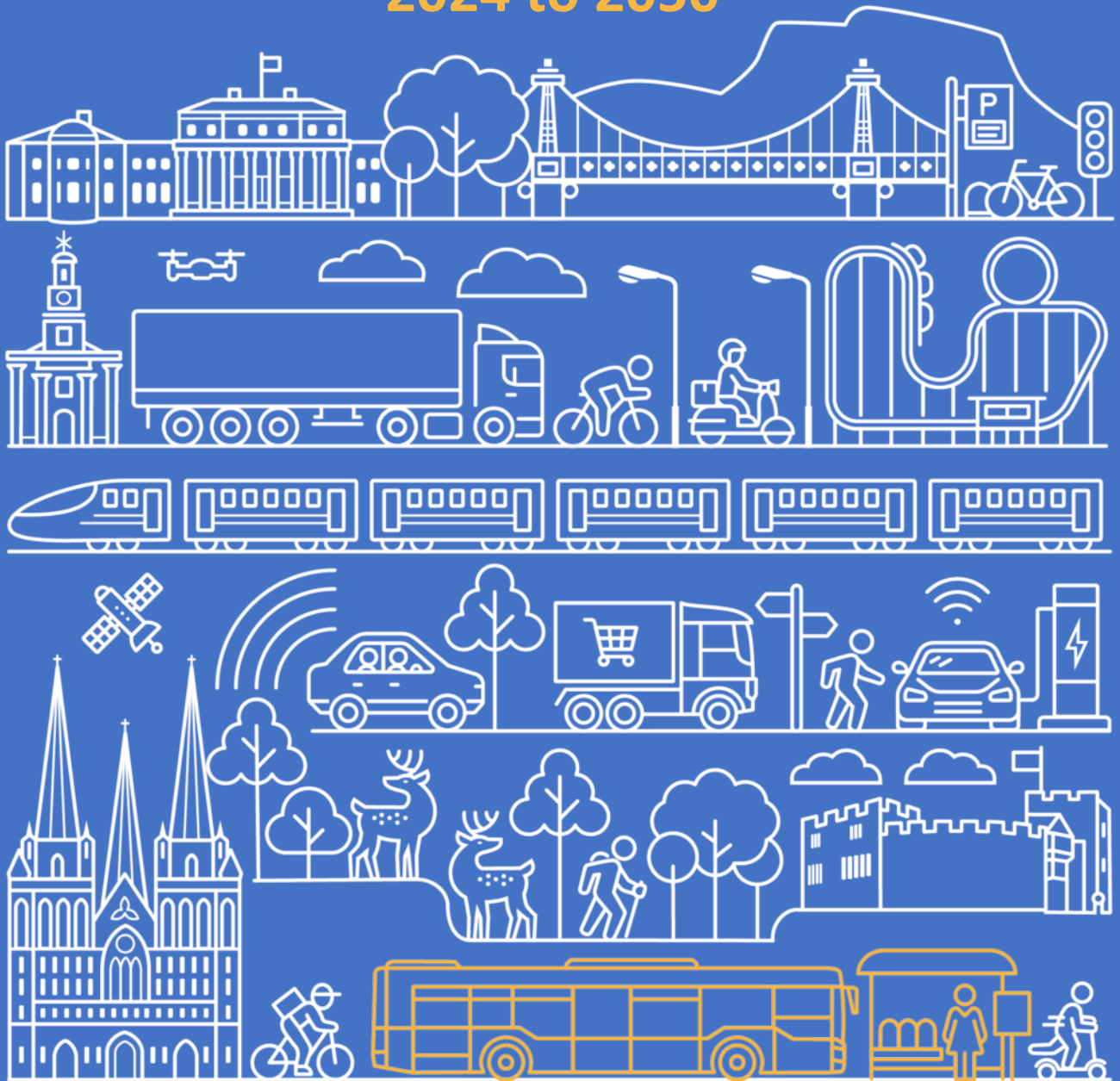**STAFFORDSHIRE**

Bus Service Improvement Plan

2024 to 2050

Staffordshire
County Council

Staffordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan, 2024 to 2050

Foreword

I am delighted to present Staffordshire's new Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which sets out how the council, together with its partners, will rejuvenate the county's bus network. The BSIP was approved by Cabinet on 19th June 2024 (Appendix A). Although the County Council does not run buses, the authority performs a vital role in shaping public transport provision acting in its role as the Local Transport Authority.

Buses are the best used form of public transport and an efficient user of road space. They provide an essential public service to residents and visitors. Unfortunately, the county's existing bus network does not serve people as well as it should. The problems are diverse and complex.

Fundamentally, bus travel needs to be accessible; cheap, ideally cheaper than a car; and it needs to take people where they want to go, at a time that is right for them. This means early morning and late evening services for the shift worker; accessible vehicles for the mobility impaired; flexible travel options for the out-patient; and a modern bus fleet for the person who wants to work during their commute.

I want buses to be a popular choice for travel in our towns - not because you don't own a car, but because it makes sense to do so as it is cheap, convenient, and better for the environment. Whilst it is unrealistic for our rural areas to have the same level of bus services as our towns, it is vital that everyone can access affordable and convenient public transport. Staffordshire's bus network must be adaptable and offer solutions that are tailored to the communities they serve.

This is easier said than done, considering that Staffordshire has seen a year-on-year decline in bus passenger numbers for well over a decade. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the decline, and bus passenger numbers remain significantly below pre-pandemic levels, despite the introduction of the £2 fare cap.

We were disappointed not to secure central government funding for our first BSIP. We have learnt from this and now set out a clear and realistic vision to create a sustainable bus network and encourage more people to choose a bus as their preferred form of transport. The BSIP, along with our emerging Local Transport Plan, puts buses at the heart of our sustainable transport offer and contributes to many of the council's wider objectives: connecting residents to jobs and education, reducing carbon emissions, and improving public health.

I am delighted that the BSIP is supported by the Staffordshire Enhanced Partnership whose members are fundamental to the Plan's delivery. The BSIP has also secured the backing of a wide range of stakeholders, who will act as our critical friends during its delivery and evaluation.

Finally, this document has the support of my colleagues, and collectively, we are determined to deliver its ambitions, along with those contained in our forthcoming Local Transport Plan. We will continue to listen to the public - the people who live and work across Staffordshire - to make sure that this BSIP is working for them and delivering the changes to buses that they want to see.

Section 1: Our Bus Vision

In March 2021, the UK Government published its National Bus Strategy, which set out its vision to significantly improve bus services in England. It sought to reverse the decline in bus use, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, and encourage more people to use buses.

To support the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy, we published our first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021. We requested funding of £113m to make the county's buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, cheaper, and greener. We were unsuccessful in this request for several reasons, including that it lacked specific details regarding which services we would prioritise and why. Learning from this and having collected further data and engaged with wider stakeholders, we have taken the opportunity to review how we will support the National Bus Strategy at a county level.

Table 1: Ambitions of the National Bus Strategy

The National Bus Strategy aims to make buses:
• More frequent
• Faster and more reliable
• Easier to understand
• Cheaper
• Easier to use
• Better to ride in
• Accessible and inclusive by design
• More comprehensive
• Greener
• Innovative
• Seen as a safe mode of transport
• Better integrated with other modes and each other

The BSIP covers the administrative area of Staffordshire County Council. A description of Staffordshire, including the demographic and economic data that was used to inform this BSIP is set out in Appendix B.

The BSIP covers the period up to 2050 - aligning to the timescale of the emerging Staffordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP). It also seeks to complement the LTP's vision, which is by 2050, Staffordshire will have:

A net-zero transport system that supports sustainable economic prosperity, healthy, safe and inclusive communities, and excellent quality of life for residents, whilst seeking to enhance the built and natural environments.

Wider council strategies and plans that the BSIP supports, include:

• The Staffordshire Economic strategy: 2023-2030, and the Rural Economic Strategy: 2023-2030. These Strategies seek to improve the county's economic prosperity. The BSIP will support this by improving access to workplaces, schools, higher and further education, town centres and high streets.

- The Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy: 2022-2027. This Strategy seeks to protect the health and quality of life of Staffordshire's residents. The BSIP will support this by encouraging bus use, which improves local air quality. Bus use also increases physical activity levels as the first and last leg of bus travel generally requires the user to walk or cycle.
- The Staffordshire Visitor Economy Action Plan: 2022-2025. This Plan seeks to create a joined-up experience, encouraging visitors to stay longer. The BSIP will support visitors to access our main tourist destinations and help them travel around the county.
- The Staffordshire Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan: 2021-2031. This Plan aims to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey. The BSIP will support this as every journey on a bus, tends to start and end in a walk or cycle.
- The emerging Staffordshire Communities Strategy. This Strategy seeks to empower groups and individuals to volunteer in their local area for the benefit of their fellow residents. The BSIP will support this by connecting neighbourhoods and enabling access to community services.

The BSIP seeks to give residents and stakeholders clarity regarding the vision for the county's bus network. Delivering the vision will require effective strategic and local planning, together with meaningful engagement, greater partnership working and sustained funding. For example, by working closely with the county's district and borough councils, we need to ensure the BSIP's objectives and proposals are embedded within their Local Plans.

The BSIP vision is that by 2050, Staffordshire will have:

A sustainable bus network and more people choosing to travel by bus as their preferred form of transport.

This vision will be achieved by ensuring:

- Buses take people where they want to go, at a time that is right for them.
- Bus journeys are expeditious and run on-time.
- Bus fares are simple to understand and cheaper than car travel.
- Ticketing is seamless between bus services and integrated across transport modes.
- Bus passengers have a strong voice and influence regarding how the bus network runs.
- Bus infrastructure is accessible, safe and well-maintained.
- Bus information is widely available, in various formats, and accessible to all users.
- Buses are accessible, zero emission, with high-quality on-board environments.

The BSIP focuses on:

- Updating baseline data to 2023/24, including highlighting our achievements since 2021.
- Describing the improvements we have and will make up to the end of 2024/25.
- Setting out objectives and a set of proposals for bus service improvements from 2025/26 to 2028/29, including our asks of our partners to help deliver the BSIP's vision.
- Describing the monitoring regime that will track progress towards the objectives and meeting the BSIP's vision.

The Staffordshire Enhanced Partnership, which comprises bus and community transport operators, has been involved in preparing the BSIP. It was formed in August 2023 and provides a forum for collaborative conversations regarding how bus services can better meet the needs of Staffordshire's residents and visitors.

Using the knowledge and expertise within the Enhanced Partnership, proposals have been identified where it is believed, that with appropriate levels of financial support, new and enhanced provision could deliver sustainable growth across the county's bus network. Members have told us the:

- Barriers they face, which hamper passenger growth.
- Support they need from us and partner organisations to create a sustainable bus network and make bus travel the preferred mode of transport.

The Enhanced Partnership has agreed to contribute to the delivery of the BSIP and forthcoming LTP, including but not limited to:

- Helping to improve bus services.
- Supporting residents with mobility impairments and those without access to a private motor vehicle.
- Seeking to improve and integrate 'other' transport services.
- Promoting alternatives to private motor vehicles.
- Promoting the use of low-emitting vehicles and vehicle efficiency.
- Reducing emissions from road transport.

Members also recognise that improvements are needed in relation to:

- Taking action to increase patronage on existing routes.
- Collecting and sharing data, knowledge and learning.
- Reviewing and procuring bus services.
- Recruiting and retaining bus drivers and support staff.
- Trialling and/or applying innovative service solutions.
- Adopting technology to control, influence and monitor services.
- Understanding the customer experience.

In light of this document, the Enhanced Partnership Agreement will be reviewed to include:

- Milestones that will help deliver the BSIP's vision and objectives.
- Key performance indicators that relate to the 'asks' of our partners.

In preparing the BSIP, we have engaged with residents[1] and stakeholders, including:

- Asist Advocacy Services
- Support Staffordshire
- Destination Staffordshire
- Staffordshire Public Health
- District and Borough Councils
- Midlands Connect
- Staffordshire Taxi Licencing Group

- Staffordshire Neuro Diversity Partnership
- Staffordshire LTP Project Board
- Better Health Staffordshire
- Staffordshire Sustainability Board
- Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services
- Staffordshire Economic Board

**Text Box 1: Staffordshire Youth Parliament**

As part of the ongoing engagement for the emerging LTP, Staffordshire Youth Parliament met in May 2024 to discuss public transport and how it could be improved to meet the needs of young people. As well as frequency, reliability, and cost, they also raised issues of safety, both at bus stops and on vehicles. They explained that travel by train was simpler as they knew where to find the necessary information and found it easier to understand. Further engagement and joint working is planned with the Youth Parliament, including the production of a short video, explaining how to find and read bus information and how to catch a bus.

A one-size-fits-all approach to increasing bus passenger numbers will not succeed in Staffordshire. For example, in our rural areas, where passenger numbers are low, bespoke approaches may be more suitable, such as demand responsive services and taxi-buses. Similarly, more tailored approaches may also be required to run evening and Sunday services across both urban and rural settings.

Whilst we will ensure that everyone has access to public transport, we will focus investment on places that have the greatest potential to sustain and grow passenger numbers. To help us identify the right locations we have applied our Capability to Achieve Sustainable Travel (CAST) Model, which we developed to inform the emerging LTP. It is based on a settlement's likelihood to move to sustainable travel options. For example, sparsely populated areas are less likely to move to sustainable travel options because they are unlikely to sustain a frequent bus service, and walking and cycling journeys are too long to be viable alternatives to car travel. The travel characteristics found in each CAST type can be found in Appendix C and Figure 1 shows the county broken down into CAST settlement types.

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[1] Via the 'Let's Talk Staffordshire' online Portal, at the Staffordshire County Show, and at libraries in Kidsgrove, Biddulph, Rugeley, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Burntwood, Norton Canes, and Leek.

Figure 1: Staffordshire's Capability to Achieve Sustainable Travel Model, August 2023
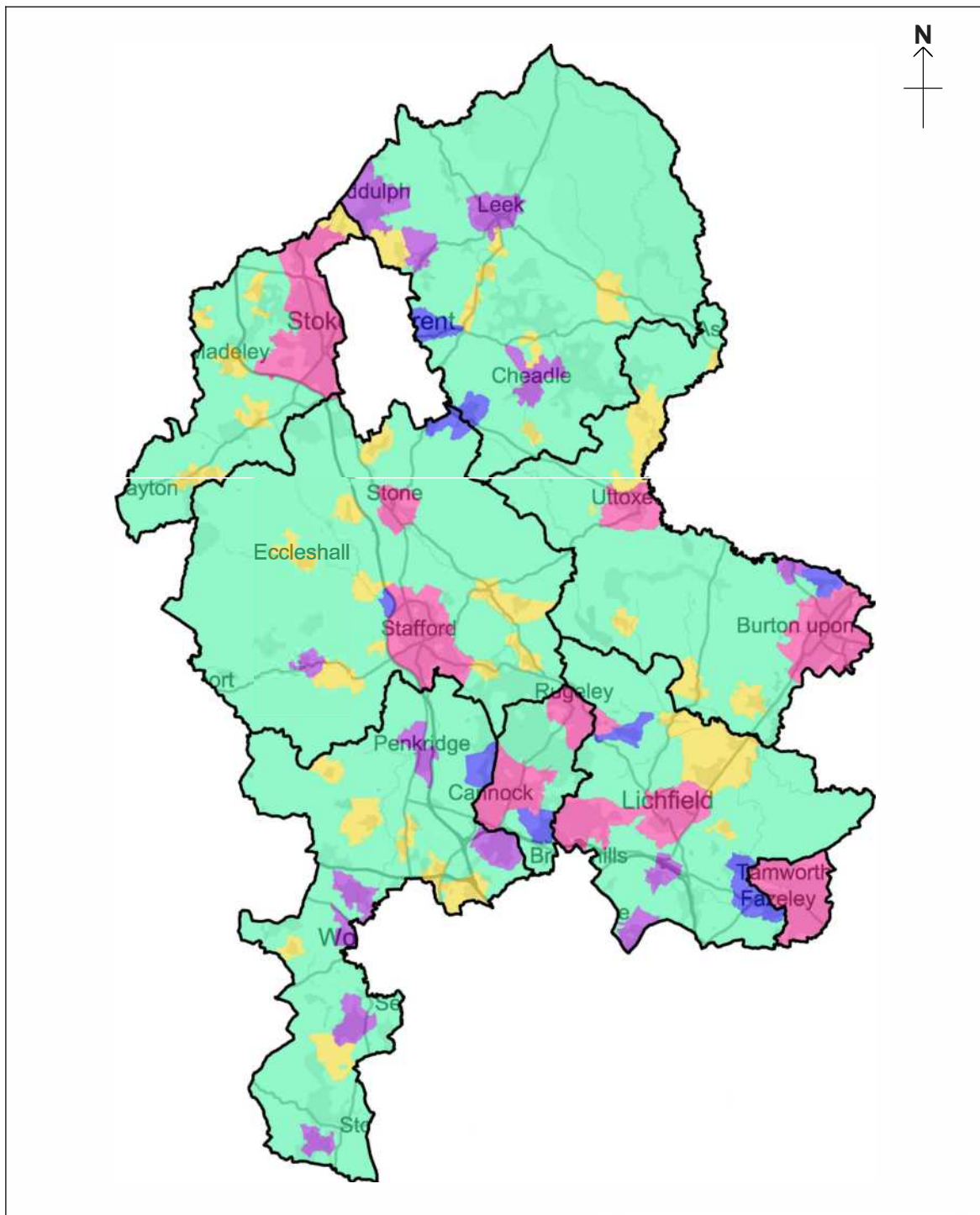
1. Settlements with all travel options available and close proximity to facilities
2. Settlements adjacent to those with all travel options and facilities
3. Settlements on key transport corridors with some facilities
4. Settlements with bus services and limited proximity to facilities
5. Settlements with very limited transport infrastructure and remote from facilities

Staffordshire County Council

Capability to Achieve Sustainable Travel

Scale: 1:400000

Section 2: Current Bus Offer

A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of Staffordshire's bus network is summarised in Table 2. This has been prepared following analysis of the county's existing bus offer and engagement with stakeholders. It provides a sense of the scale and complexity involved in achieving the BSIP's vision.

Table 2: Strengths and weaknesses of Staffordshire's existing bus network

Ambitions of the National Bus Strategy ... *to make buses:*	Strengths	Weaknesses
More frequent	• 15-minute frequency services in Tamworth, Cannock and Keele.	• No 10-minute frequency services anywhere in the county.
Faster and more reliable	• Lichfield to Burton and Lichfield to Tamworth express services.	• Inter-urban services are required to serve many communities extending journey times. • Impact of temporary traffic management measures in urban areas. • Just two thirds of bus services run on time, between 60% to 80% of the time.
Easier to understand	• Some operators have excellent websites, including journey planners. • Rollout of RTPI infrastructure.	• No central source of bus information. • Place names and service numbers can be confusing, especially for visitors. • Frequent timetable changes. • Some operators do not have websites. • Not all operators have the software to share RTPI data.
Cheaper	• National £2 Fare cap. • Staffordshire Knot ticket. • Smart Ticket (Newcastle only).	• Family and group tickets not available from all operators or well-advertised. • Limited competition between operators on key corridors. • Plusbus not advertised within Staffordshire for rail and bus combined journeys.
Easier to use	• Electric buses are being introduced, which will provide a high-quality experience. • Enhanced Partnership has committed to introducing a passenger charter.	• Some bus stops do not have raised platforms. • First time bus passengers do not always know how to catch a bus and where to seek information. • Perception that bus drivers are unhelpful.
Better to ride in	• Operators investing in new vehicles when commercially viable.	• Few buses with WiFi, air conditioning and high-quality seating and interiors.

	• Electric buses are being introduced, which will provide a high-quality experience.	
Accessible and inclusive by design	• All buses are low-floor with ramps. • Enhanced Partnership is committed to introducing travel assistance cards. • Statutory and enhanced concessionary fare schemes.	• Few vehicles with next stop announcements and visual displays. • Some bus stops do not have raised platforms. • Aging bus fleet.
More comprehensive	• Ongoing efforts to fill in the gaps of provision within available resources. • 56% of bus services operate on a commercial basis. • Many cross-boundary bus routes.	• Limited evening and Sunday services. • Significant number of households are not within 400m of an hourly or better bus service.
Greener	• Electric buses are being introduced, which are zero emitting. • Operators invest in newer, greener vehicles when commercially viable.	• Half of buses are lower than Euro VI emissions standard. • Profitability limits investment in new vehicles and supporting infrastructure for zero emission buses.
Innovative	• Staffordshire Knot ticket. • Moorlands Connect and Border Car - demand responsive transport serving remote rural areas. • Enhancements to the concessionary fare scheme.	• No hydrogen filling station accessible for Staffordshire's operators. • Profitability limits investment in new vehicles and charging infrastructure for zero emission buses.
Seen as a safe mode of transport	• Bus stop infrastructure survey is providing the data required to improve safety at stops. • High prevalence of CCTV on buses with operators continuing to expand.	• Poor perception of security at some bus stops • Poor levels of satisfaction regarding safety whilst using bus services. • Low levels of road traffic collisions involving buses, as well as low levels of crime.
Better integrated with other modes and each other	• Plusbus is available in Staffordshire for rail ticket purchasers. • Proximity of bus stops to rail stations e.g. Stafford, Lichfield, Burton and Kidsgrove.	• Bus services are not timed to coincide with rail services. Frequent timetable changes for both modes make this challenging.

The remainder of this section provides greater detail on key aspects of Staffordshire's current bus offer, including its composition, performance, and views of the public and/or passengers.

2.1 Bus Operators

There are 19 bus operators in the county, operating over 200 separate services (Table 3). The biggest operator in terms of the number of services is Diamond Bus EM who run 20% of the county's bus services. Other large operators include D&G, Chaserider, Select and Arriva Midlands. Collectively, these five operators run almost two-thirds (64%) of all bus services in the county and 64% of all commercial services. The remaining 14 operators, run just over one-third (36%) of the county's bus services and 36% of all commercial services.

Table 3: Staffordshire Bus Operators, 2023

Operator	Operating Group Size	Staffordshire Depot	Estimated Service Mileage per week in Staffs	% Mileage operated per week	Number of vehicles in operation on Staffs services
A&M Group	None	No	17.2	0.0%	1
Aimee's	None	Yes	1,529.5	1.0%	3
Arriva	Big	Yes	28,170.1	17.7%	36
Ashbourne Little Bus*	None	No	46.4	0.0%	1
Banga	None	No	955.2	0.6%	4
Bennetts Travel	None	Yes	809.3	0.5%	1
Chaserider	Smaller	Yes	30,770.4	19.4%	50
D&G	Smaller	No**	18,961.3	11.9%	56
Diamond Bus	Smaller	Yes	1,426.6	0.9%	4
Diamond Bus EM	Smaller	Yes	24,574.5	15.5%	61
First Potteries	Big	No**	18,243.8	11.5%	90
High Peak (Bowers)	Smaller	No	660.0	0.4%	2
National Express WM	Big	No	14,215.6	8.9%	54
Stagecoach	Big	No	823.0	0.5%	8
South Derbyshire Coaches	None	Yes	342.0	0.2%	1
Select Bus	None	Yes	10,995.9	6.9%	42
Stantons	None	Yes	428.5	0.3%	2
TrentBarton	Smaller	No	5,940.5	3.7%	12

* Commercial arm of Ashbourne Community Transport.
** Depots in Stoke-on-Trent.

Two bus services are run by non-bus operators:

- Kinver Community Transport run a fixed route circular bus service in the village on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Staffs Border Travel operate Staffordshire Border Car, which is a demand responsive service for people living in the west of the county, without access to a regular bus service or who cannot use public transport due to a disability or mobility difficulty.

In terms of the distance travelled by local services, Chaserider covers the most miles per week, followed by Arriva, and Diamond Bus EM. The disparity between the number of services provided and the miles travelled is due to the nature of the services. For example, Diamond Bus EM runs relatively shorter services and runs almost half of the county's school and college day only services (47%). The map in Appendix D shows the estimated weekly mileage of all bus operators in the county across their networks.

Nine operators run services from depots in the county and tend to cover specific areas as shown in Figure 2. For example, Arriva have a depot in Tamworth and predominantly run services in the south and east of the county, whereas First has a depot in Stoke-on-Trent and runs services in the north. The largest operator in terms of vehicle fleet is Diamond Bus EM who operate 61 buses from their Burton depot.

Since the first BSIP was published, 3 bus operators - Hulleys of Baslow, Notts & Derby, and Scraggs Coaches have ceased operating local bus services in the county. One operator, Midland Classic, has been taken over by Rotala PLC and re-named Diamond Bus EM.

Figure 2: Staffordshire's Bus Routes, Depots and Operators' areas of operation, August 2023

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Staffordshire County Council 2024

High Peak	**First**	Bus depots - colour corresponds to bus operator
Ashbourne CT	**Diamond Bus East Midlands**	
Banga	**TrentBarton**	
NXWM	**Select Bus**	
Stantons	**Chaserider**	
Bennetts Travel	**D&G**	
Taxico	**South Derbyshire Coaches**	
Arriva	**A&M Group**	
Diamond Bus	Moorlands Connect Project Area	
Stagecoach	Border Car Project Area	

Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Bus Companies Operating Areas

Scale: 1:520000

2.2 Bus Fleet

Staffordshire's combined bus fleet comprises over 430 vehicles. Profit levels and mandatory air quality policies are the main drivers for investment. Clean Air Zones in areas such as Birmingham are likely to affect how operators cascade vehicles throughout their fleets which can be detrimental to the fleet within Staffordshire. However, operators are committed to investing in Staffordshire where possible.

Many operators have already made significant steps to improve their emissions through purchasing vehicles that meet the latest Euro standard - Euro VI. Half (50%) of the county's bus fleet meet this standard.

Staffordshire is soon to get its first electric buses, which are seen as one way to providing a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable public transport system. Electric buses significantly reduce harmful pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter.

All vehicles operating a registered local bus service must meet the minimum accessibility criteria set out in Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) 2000 for vehicles of their class, age, and type. This includes ramps or lifts for wheelchair passengers, colour contrasting to help visually impaired people identify stanchions, and provision of a wheelchair space.

The age profile of Staffordshire's bus fleet means that only some provide facilities such as Wi-Fi. Very few buses currently have audio-visual announcements, meaning that passengers who are unfamiliar with the route, or who are hard of hearing or visually impaired, are unsure when to get off the bus.

Most buses are fitted with closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems. Where they are not, the operator is in the process of procuring it. CCTV acts as a deterrent to potential criminal activity and antisocial behaviour on buses. It also allows for immediate intervention, whether it be alerting the depot or Police, or the driver intervening to diffuse the situation. Every bus operator has procedures in place so that the driver could immediately contact the depot should an incident occur.

2.3 Bus Drivers

The actions and attitudes of bus drivers and the service they provide, can help to improve passenger trust and can encourage greater use of bus services. Bus drivers are the face of the bus company and can play a vital role in retaining bus passengers.

Bus drivers must complete 35 hours of training every 5 years. As well as anticipating, assessing, and adapting to risks of the road and those posed by other traffic users, the training also covers dealing with emergency situations on and off the bus, passenger comfort and safety, and passenger interactions (including with disabled passengers and children). According to the National Highways and Travel (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey 2023, compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 13th out of 15 in

terms of public satisfaction with the helpfulness of drivers. Staffordshire scored 64%, whereas the lowest authority scored 62% and the highest, 74%. This level of satisfaction is demonstrated by feedback collected by Asist Advocacy Services. Asist are a local organisation that work alongside people with physical and learning disabilities and mental health conditions. In 2023, they collected feedback on bus travel by their users, which included drivers not giving sufficient time for people to sit or vacate the bus; and drivers showing their impatience when dealing with neurodiverse passengers who have got anxious whilst travelling on the bus.

Driver recruitment and retention remains a key issue; one local operator reported a 100% turnover of staff in one year. Anti-social hours and poor remuneration remain the main reasons. Some operators are trying to accommodate drivers' requests for different working patterns, while others are looking at apprenticeships, career-switching roles for over-50s, fast-tracking foreign drivers, and employing part-time and casual staff. Operators report that it is not just a shortage of bus drivers, but they are also seeing a shortage of vehicle technicians.

2.4 Revenue Funding for Bus Services

The annual amount paid by the council and national Government (at current prices) to support local bus services is shown in Figure 3. Overall, the amount has fallen by almost £1m over the last decade. However, since its low in 2019, the amount has started to rise.

Figure 3: Annual Public Sector Spend (£ thousands) on Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2012/13 to 2022/23
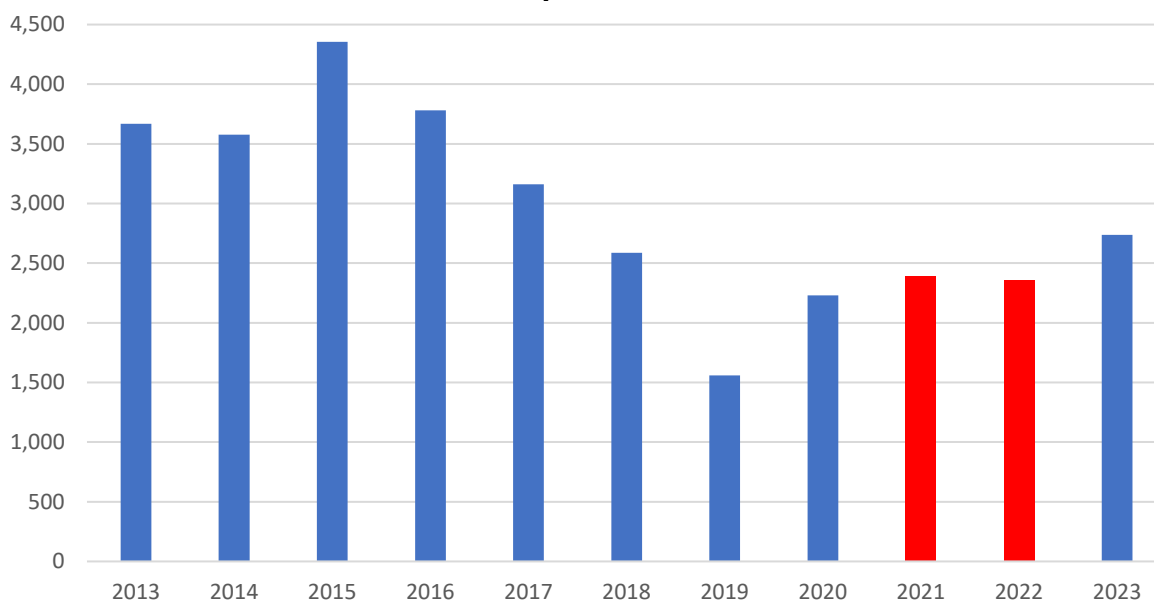
2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

Sources of revenue funding, which the council invests into public transport provision is set out in Table 4, and Table 5 sets out the sources of revenue grant aid.

Table 4: Revenue Funding Spent on Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2020/21 to 2023/24 (£m)

Source of Revenue Funding	Year			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
SCC Core Funding	0.5	0.8	1.3	1.6
Grant aid	0.7	0.7	1	1.6
Total	**1.2**	**1.5**	**2.3**	**3.3**

Table 5: Revenue Grant Aid Spent to on Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2020/21 to 2023/24 (£m)

Sources of Grant Aid	Year			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Bus Service Operators Grant	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Local Support Grant	-	0.007	0.1	0.1
Local Transport Fund	-	-	0.2	0.6
Bus Service Improvement Plan	-	-	-	0.2
Total	**0.7**	**0.7**	**1**	**1.6**

2.5 Capital Funding for Bus Services

The sources of capital funding for local bus services over the last four years is set out in Table 6, and Table 7 shows the range of measures this funding has supported.

Table 6: Sources of Capital Funding on Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2020/21 to 2023/24 (£m)

Source of Capital Funding	Year			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sec 106	0.02	0.002	0.018	-
3rd Party Contributions	0.05	0.034	0.014	0.002
DfT (IT Block)	0.21	0.062	0.035	0.060
Revenue (to support capital schemes)	-	0.062	0.055	0.038
External Grant	-	-	0.046	0.131
Total	**0.28**	**0.16**	**0.167**	**0.230**

Table 7: Capital Expenditure on Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2020/21 to 2023/24 (£m)

Capital Expenditure	Year			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Bus information	0.25	0.068	0.13	0.166
Bus infrastructure	0.01	0.002	-	0.062
Bus priority	0.02	0.06	0.02	-
Rural Mobility	-	0.03	0.01	-
Studies	-	-	0.01	0.0015
Total	**0.28**	**0.16**	**0.167**	**0.230**

2.6 Bus Services

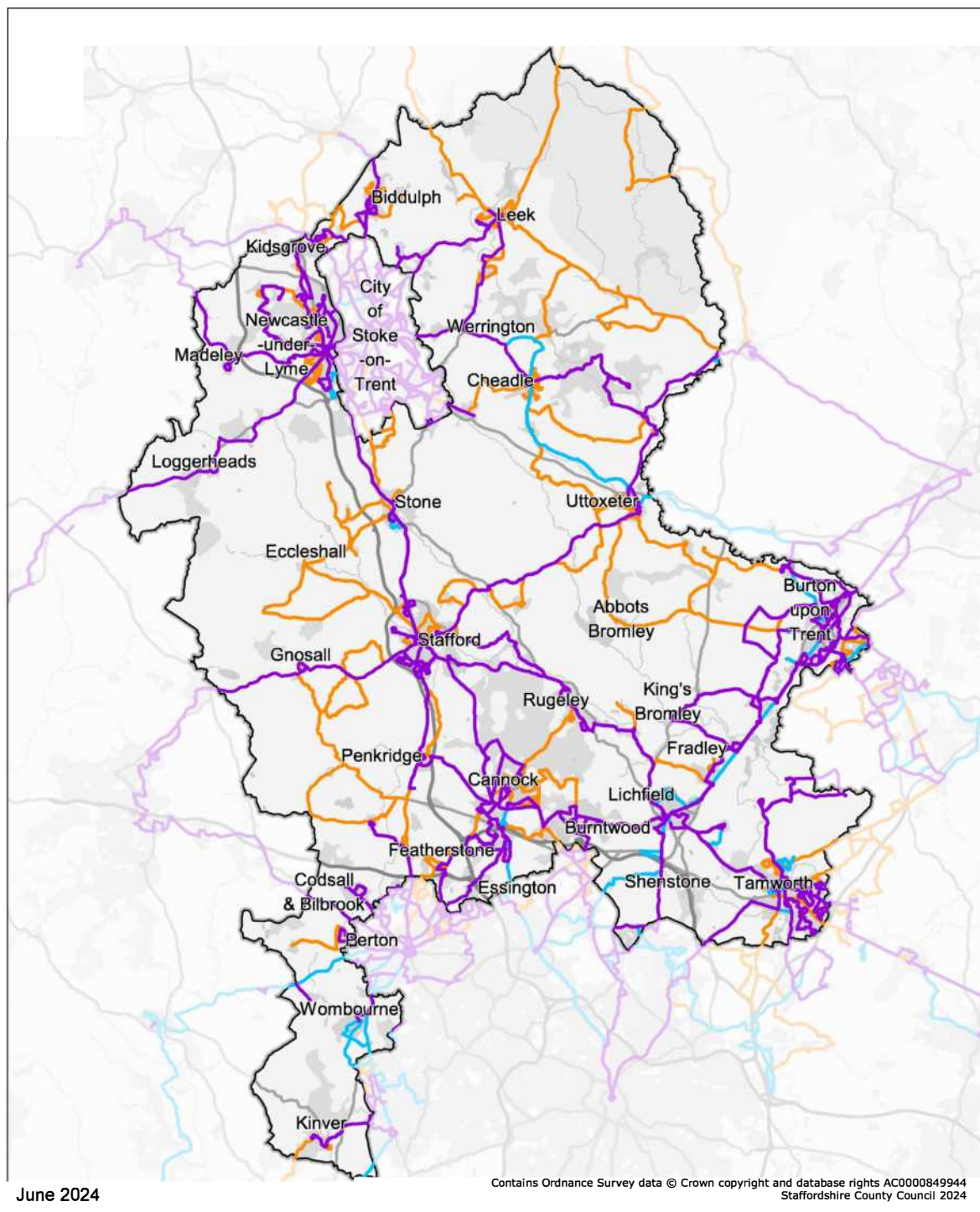There are over 200 bus services operating in the county, comprising:

- Approximately 60% commercial services, requiring no financial support from the council.
- Approximately 40% socially and economically necessary services, requiring financial support from the council. These range from town circulars, inter-urban routes, demand responsive, weekend, and evening services.

The bus services are mapped in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Commercial and Subsidised Bus Network in Staffordshire, June 2024

June 2024

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Staffordshire County Council 2024

Scale: 1:400000

—— Commercial

—— Part Subsidised

—— Subsidised

Staffordshire County Council

Commercial and Subsidised Bus Services

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and conditions shown at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/maps
Staffordshire County Council, 05/06/2024.
Aerial photography copyright Airbus 2024.

Of the socially and economically necessary bus services, over half are fully funded by the council; one third are part funded; and over 10% are fully or partly funded by third parties. For example, service 93 (Biddulph – Biddulph Moor) is part funded by Biddulph Town Council.

Sixty registered bus services cater predominately for education needs and run on school and/or college days only. In 2023/24, £1.68m was spent on school transport passes that can be used on designated local bus services. This funding comes from the Transport Operations and Future Connectivity's budget rather than from Education. In part, this is because these services are beneficial to residents as it gives them more travel options.

Almost half of all bus services in the county are cross-boundary. The busiest routes are travelling to Stoke-on-Trent (e.g. 3/3A/4/4A, 9, 25 and 101), Derbyshire (e.g. 8, 9 and Villager) and the West Midlands conurbation (e.g. 110 and X51). These destinations play an important role, providing employment, further and higher education, cultural activities, and secondary health care provision. Appendix E provides a summary of Staffordshire's local bus services.

Over the last 10 years, there has been a fall in the distance travelled by both commercial and socially and economically necessary bus services (Figures 5 and 6 respectively[2]) and the proportion of supported bus services has also fallen (Figure 7). There are many reasons for this, including a rise in operational costs and car ownership levels; reimbursement for concessionary fares not covering the actual costs; and the change in travel patterns following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5: Annual Distance Travelled (in million kms) by Commercial Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2012/13 to 2022/23
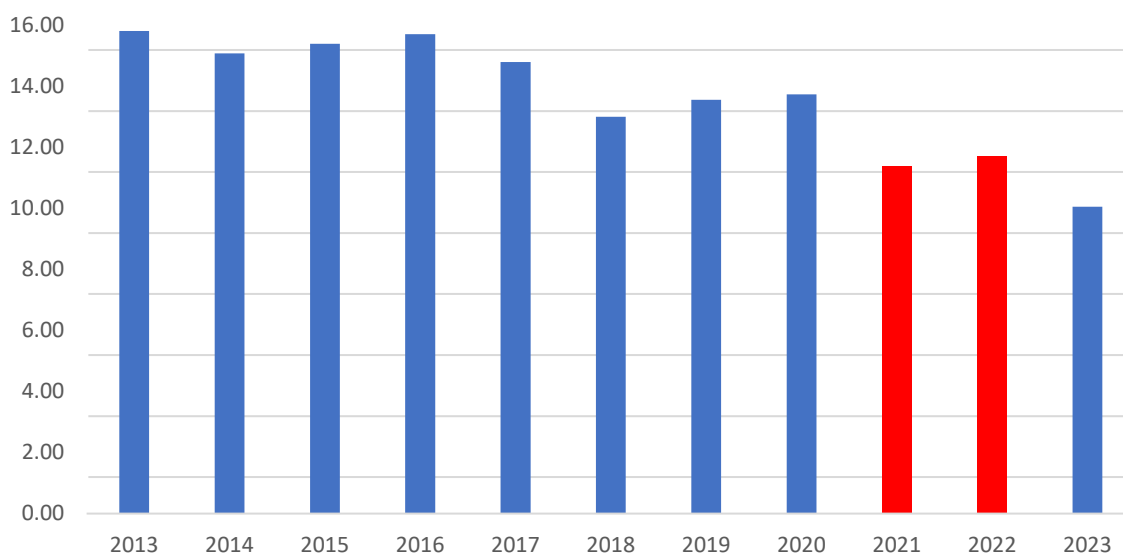
2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

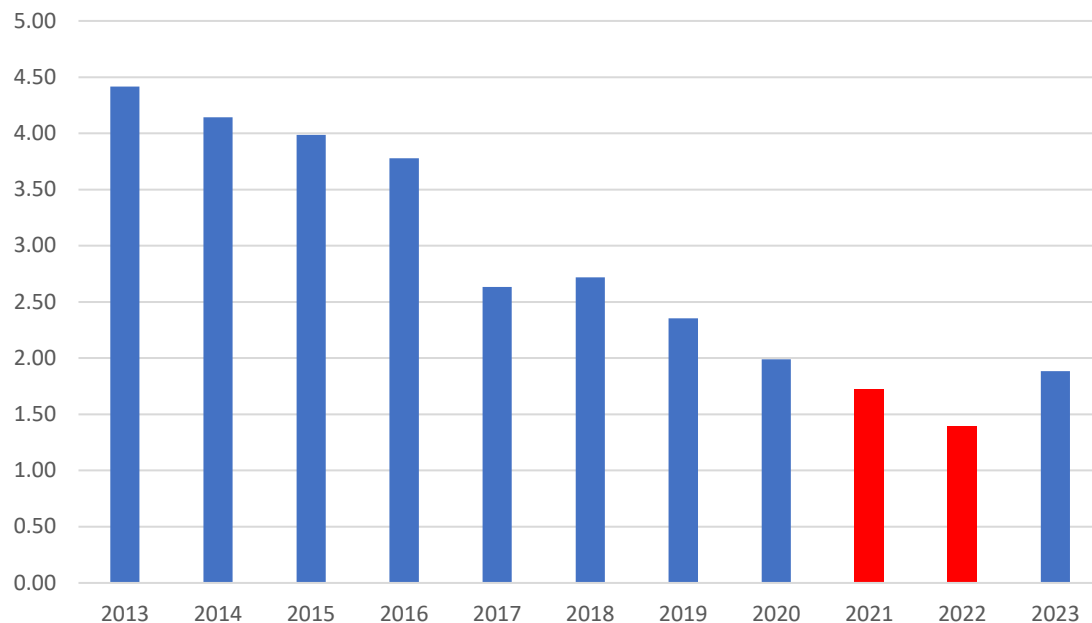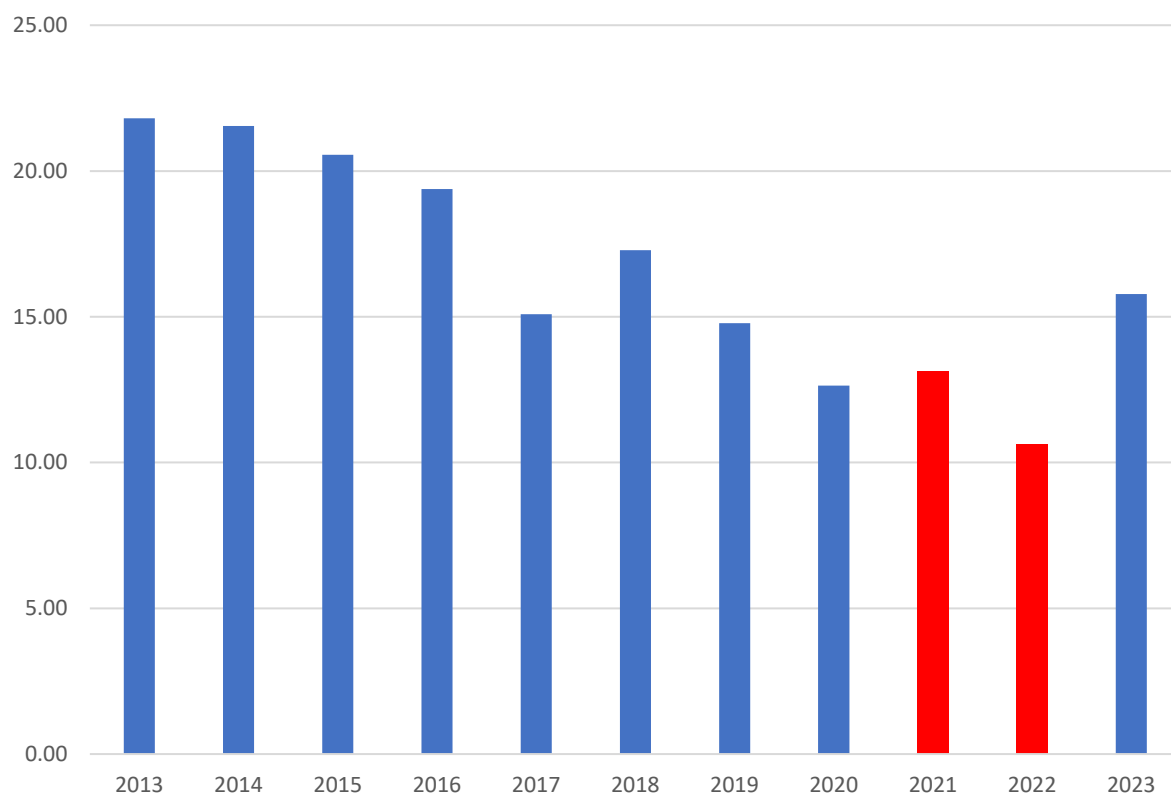[2] Source: Department for Transport Table BUS02d_km.

Figure 6: Annual Distance Travelled (in million km) by Supported Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2012/13 to 2022/23

2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

Figure 7: Annual Proportion of Supported Bus Services in Staffordshire, 2012/13 to 2022/23

2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

2.7 Bus Frequencies

Bus frequencies vary across the county. For example, in our Type 1 settlements, many services operate a minimum of half-hourly, with some routes operating every 15 minutes. The frequencies are less and more variable on our inter-urban routes. Beyond these, in our Type 5 settlements, provision is sparse, and in some places, it is as little as one bus a week. Staffordshire's settlement types are shown on Figure 1.

There are two demand responsive transport services operating in the county - Moorlands Connect and Staffordshire Border Car. They offer an affordable and flexible bus service for people living in their project areas who are not served by a bus route and for whom cycling is not a viable alternative. They are also an invaluable feeder service, allowing passengers to connect onto the fixed route bus network to travel into larger towns and cities.

Text Box 2: Moorlands Connect

Booked via a mobile app or telephone, Moorlands Connect provides door-to-door transport in the northeast part of Staffordshire Moorlands. It operates 7 days a week in the summer and 6 days a week in the winter. It picks up and drops off passengers anywhere in the project area, taking them to Leek, Ashbourne and Buxton. It can also connect to scheduled buses that go to Cheadle, Macclesfield, Hanley and Derby.

Figure 8: Bus Passenger Boarding Moorlands Connect

The service has been operating in various forms since 2010 and has undertaken over 20,000 journeys since this time. It has been funded by the Rural Mobility Fund since 2021. It had three-years funding with the fourth year being funded by the County Council.

The viability of Moorlands Connect is continually reviewed as the subsidy per passenger is high. At the same time, it is recognised that it plays a vital role in one of the county's most sparsely populated areas.

In 2018, around 40% of subsidised services were withdrawn due to budgetary pressures. This was done in a way that we retained the greatest number of daytime journeys, whilst minimising the public subsidy per passenger trip. This now means that across the county, there is limited bus provision during the evenings and on Sundays.

2.8 Bus Fares

Taking the bus is an affordable way to travel and is cheaper than running a car (Text Box 3). Since the COVID-19 restrictions ended, bus operators have sought to cater for post-pandemic travel patterns and have worked with central Government to deliver the national £2 fare cap[3], which is due to stop at the end of 2024. There are just a handful of smaller bus operators that have not registered to accept the £2 fare.

> **Text Box 3: Cost of bus travel vs car ownership**
> Bus travel is cheaper than owning a car. An annual Smart Ticket, operating in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle, is £400 for an adult. The average annual cost of running a car in the UK is around £3,580, although individual expenses can vary depending on car type, mileage, etc[4].

The Staffordshire Knot ticket provides unlimited travel all day across the county for £7 and the Smart Ticket provides unlimited travel in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle for £3.50. Aside from these two tickets, individual bus operators offer their own fare options, many of which are cheaper and wider ranging than the Knot ticket.

Young people are often reliant on buses, yet the cost of bus use is a particular challenge for them. Speaking with members of the Staffordshire Youth Council, transport plays an important role in their lives – it helps them connect to new experiences, to become independent and to develop their identities. For many however, the cost of bus travel is a barrier to them accessing the places, opportunities, and people they need to help them to thrive. Getting young people to view buses as their preferred mode of travel is important as it will instil good travel behaviour, delaying the time, or removing the need, for car ownership.

Accessing information about fares can be a barrier to bus travel. Not all bus operators have websites and where they do, they are often difficult to navigate and carry information about their own fares and tickets only.

Compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 9th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with bus fares. Staffordshire scored 53%, whereas the lowest authority scored 49% and the highest, 63%.

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3 Adult single fare for any length of journey.
4 Marsh Finance, Unveiling the True Cost of Car Ownership in the UK in 2024, Will Marsh, 1 February 2024.

2.9 Bus Tickets

The Staffordshire Knot is a multi-operator ticket that covers over three-quarters (77%) of the county's bus network. The ticket costs £7 for unlimited travel all day. The Knot ticket was introduced in 2019 and since then it has been issued almost 60,000 times. As shown in Table 8, there was a dramatic decrease in ticket sales in 2023/2024. This is because one big operator withdrew from the scheme and the £2 fare cap was introduced at the beginning of 2023.

Table 8: Annual Number of Staffordshire Knot Tickets Issued, 2019/20 to 2023/24

	Year			
	2019/20	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**
Knot tickets issued	8,805	16,883	33,285*	12,593**

* One operator saw a significant increase in Knot ticket sales in 2022/23.
** One operator withdrew from the Knot ticket scheme in 2023/24 and a cheaper, alternative day ticket was introduced in areas boarding Stoke-on-Trent, which made the Knot ticket less competitive.

Bus passengers in Newcastle can make use of the Smart Ticket, which operates across the wider Potteries area. An adult day ticket is £3.50, although there are also weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual Smart Cards available.

A PlusBus ticket gives you unlimited bus travel on participating bus operators when a rail ticket is bought. For example, buying a PlusBus ticket on a train to Stafford rail station, means passengers can travel on any bus service on the Arriva, Chaserider, D&G, First, and Select Bus networks. An adult day ticket is £3.90, although there are also weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual PlusBus tickets available.

Midlands Connect and other strategic partners[5] are developing a single national back-office solution for multi-operator contactless ticketing, which will include both bus and tram services. It will be similar to a 'pay as you go' scheme like the Oyster card in London. It will allow passengers to have unlimited travel within a defined area for a daily, weekly, or monthly price, which is capped.

Children receive discounted travel on all of Staffordshire's bus services, but the eligibility and discount vary between operators.

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[5] DfT, West Midlands Combined Authority and Project Coral - a consortium of bus operators.

2.10 Bus Infrastructure

We have a vested interest in the provision and maintenance of bus stops as they are the first point of contact between the passenger and the bus service. The spacing, location, design, and condition of bus stops, and its assets (e.g. information provision, seating, lighting, etc.), significantly influences a passenger's experience and, in some instances, can be a barrier to use. Therefore, bus infrastructure must be integrated, accessible, safe, well-maintained, welcoming and comfortable.

There are 4,049 bus stops across the county (Figure 9) and their locations by district are detailed in Table 9. Figure 10 shows the locations of RTPI infrastructure in 2024.

We are part way through a survey of all bus stops in the county, looking at their facilities, assessing their condition and compliance with DDA requirements. Initial findings indicate that overall, 36% of stops do not display any travel information and 75% of stops do not have a shelter. For many of these stops the location or physical space available does not allow for a shelter. Just over half of the stops surveyed so far do not have a pedestrian dropped kerb or a raised platform to enable accessible boarding. Once completed and analysed with passenger boarding data, we will be able to target our resources where the greatest value will be generated. Figure 11 shows the locations of the county's accessible bus stops, and Appendix F shows the locations in Type 1 settlements.

Table 9: Breakdown of Bus Stops in Staffordshire

Bus Stop by Type	District / Borough								Total
	Stafford	East Staffs	South Staffs	Lichfield	Cannock	Tamworth	Moorlands	Newcastle	
Bus stops in district	592	690	459	427	403	323	533	608	**4035**
Shelters in district	199	145	107	94	115	118	131	179	**1088**
Shelters owned and maintained by SCC	27	4	4	3	36	3	52	77	**206**
RTPI displays	43	34	2	11	26	16	5	16	**154**
Free standing bus totems	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	6	**9**

Figure 9: Location of Staffordshire Bus Stops, 2024
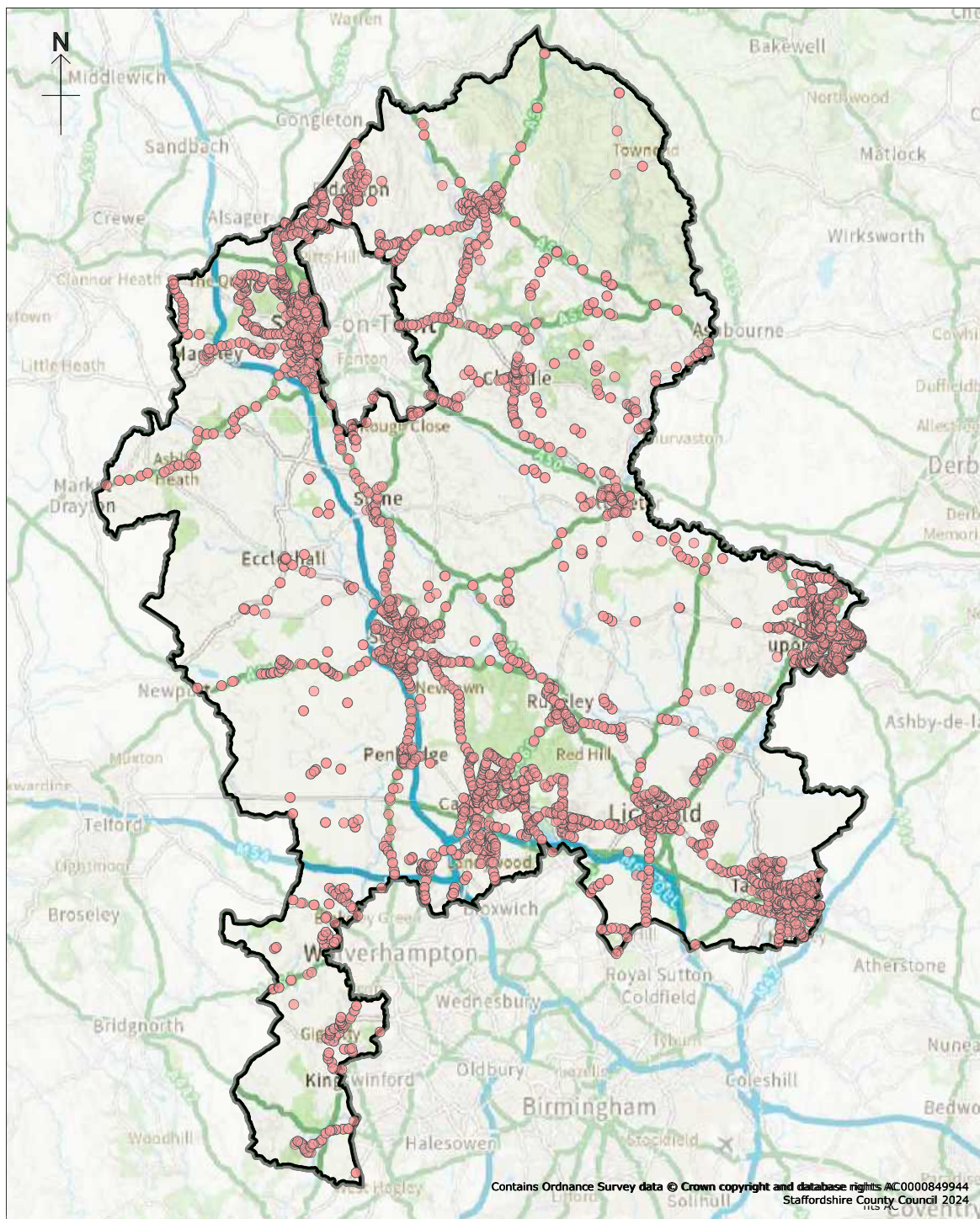
Locations of Bus Stops

Bus Stop Locations Countywide

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and conditions shown at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/maps
Staffordshire County Council, 07/06/2024.
Aerial photography copyright Airbus 2024.

Scale: 1:650000

Figure 10: Location of RTPI Infrastructure, 2024
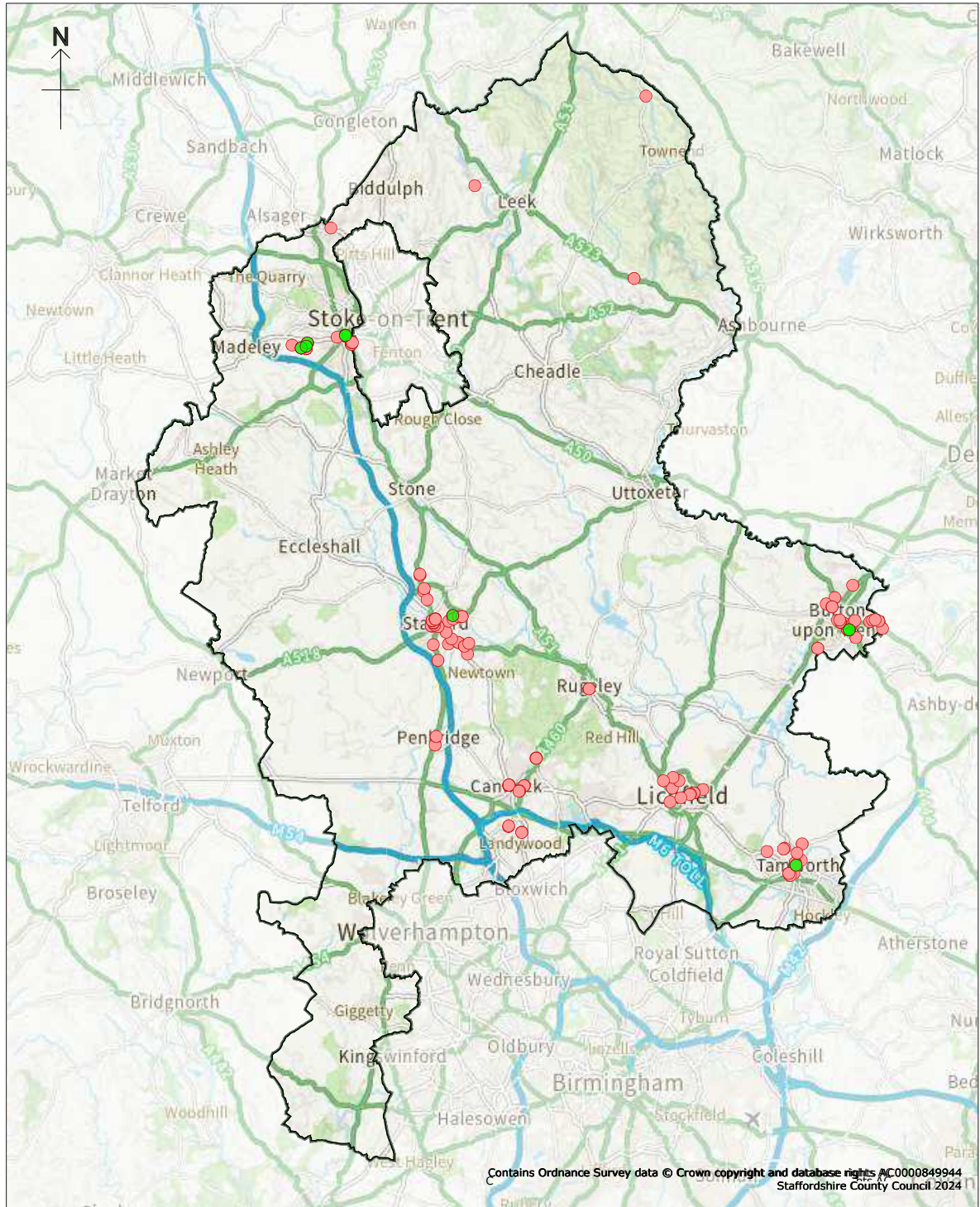
Scale: 1:399999

Figure 11: Staffordshire Bus Stop Accessibility, 2024
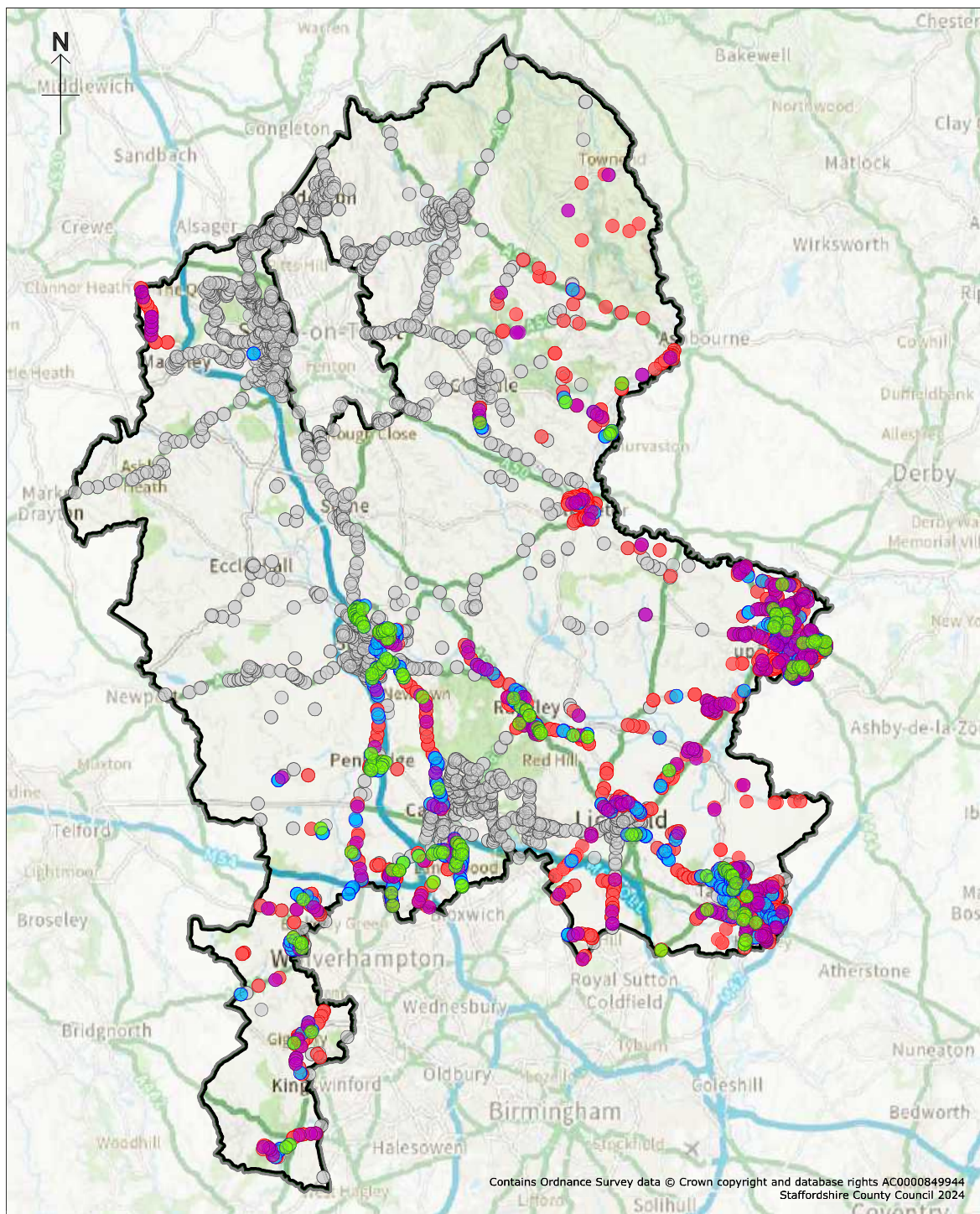
Bus Stops with a Pedestrian Access Dropped Kerb and a Raised Platform

Bus Stops with No Pedestrian Access Dropped Kerb and No Raised Platform

Bus Stops with a Pedestrian Access Dropped Kerb and No Raised Platform

Bus Stops with No Pedestrian Access Dropped Kerb and a Raised Platform

Bus Stops yet to be Surveyed

Scale: 1:650000

Countywide Bus Stop Locations

Compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 11th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with the provision of bus stops. Staffordshire scored 81%, whereas the lowest authority scored 71% and the highest, 90%.

Last year, Staffordshire's Bus Infrastructure Design Guide was published (Appendix G). It sought to assist those involved in the planning, designing and installing of new bus infrastructure, with the aim of ensuring a consistently high quality, operational efficiency and full integration with the local environment and highway network.

2.11 Passenger Information

Information regarding bus services must be provided in numerous formats to cater for everyone's needs, whether they are at home, on the move, at the bus stop or on the bus. People need to know where their nearest bus stop is, when a bus will arrive, who the operator is, what the fare will be, how they can pay, and what the experience will be like. Disabled passengers also need to know that the bus stops and vehicles are accessible throughout their whole journey and be reassured that the bus driver will be considerate to their needs.

Bus information is currently available:

- In printed format at 64% of bus stops and in some public buildings.
- On digital real-time passenger information (RTPI) displays at 3% of bus stops.
- Digitally via the council's and operators' websites, and on Traveline's mobile phone app.
- To subscribers of the council's Travel News.
- Via onboard audio-visual information on some buses.

RTPI, either at a bus stop or viewed via a mobile device, allows passengers to plan their journey more efficiently, reducing waiting times and minimising the risk of missing a bus. Some displays can also show other local information, such as maps and nearby amenities, which helps passengers navigate unfamiliar areas and make informed decisions about their travel options. The absence of RTPI can make bus travel feel slower and less reliable.

Whilst the majority of the county's bus fleet is RTPI-enabled, not all bus operators have the back-office software to allow them to share real-time data with the RTPI displays and hosted platforms, such as Traveline.

Staffordshire's RTPI comprises:

- 85 smart shelters at high usage stops, especially which are used by several services (Figure 12).
- 8 larger, free standing Bus Information Totems, which can be found in high footfall areas, including town centres and at Keele University (Figure 13).
- 54 free-standing real-time displays that can be fitted outside of the shelter, fitted to poles or in a cabinet, rather than having them mounted within a shelter (Figure 14).
- 6 TFT displays in employer settings - Moog, JLR and Staffordshire County Council.

Figure 12: Smart Shelter at a Bus Shelter in Cannock

Figure 13: Bus Information Totem outside Staffordshire Place 1 in Stafford

Figure 14: RTPI Pole on the A449 in Penkridge

Compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 9th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with the ease of finding the right public transport information. Staffordshire scored 44%, whereas the lowest authority scored 41% and the highest, 55%. Staffordshire is ranked 11th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with the provision of public transport information, and 7th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with the accuracy of bus information.

2.12 Bus Priority

Slow buses increase operating costs, prolong passengers' unproductive time, and deter non-bus users from making the switch to bus travel. The Confederation of Passenger Transport suggests that the average bus travels at just 10.7mph and if this increased by 10%, passenger numbers could grow by 2.5% and operating costs fall by 8%[6].

Bus priority measures keep buses moving, giving them precedence over other modes of transport so they can avoid congestion, improve journey times and reliability.

Staffordshire has 9 bus priority measures. These are:

- South Walls, Stafford
- Chell Road, Stafford
- Stone Business Park, Stone
- High Street, Burton
- King Edward Place, Burton
- Barracks Road, Newcastle
- Bridge Street, Stafford
- Gainsborough Drive, Perton
- i54 Innovation Drive, South Staffordshire

The bus priority measures operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They restrict access to all vehicles except buses, emergency vehicles, taxis, and cyclists.

Whilst Urban Traffic Control (UTC) exist in Stafford, Cannock, Lichfield, Newcastle, Leek, and Burton, they have not been expanded to provide virtual bus priority. If bus unreliability coincides with traffic signal control, then virtual bus priority will be considered for delivery to improve service reliability and passenger experience.

2.13 Bus Use

Access to a frequent bus service in the county has dropped only slightly over recent years; in 2017, 78.9% of households were within 400m of an hourly or better bus service and this figure is now at 77.2%. This is despite the number of households increasing by 8.62%.

The highest figure in the county (amongst Type 1 settlements shown in Figure 1) is in Lichfield where the accessibility level is 97.4%. Stone and Rugeley have the lowest levels of accessibility across Type 1 settlements, at 56.0% and 87.1% respectively.

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[6] Confederation of Passenger Transport, Bus Industry Costs in 2023.

Despite accessibility levels remaining relatively constant, the total number of bus passenger journeys made since 2017 has fallen by 44% as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Annual Passenger Journeys in Staffordshire, 2012/2013 to 2022/23 (millions)
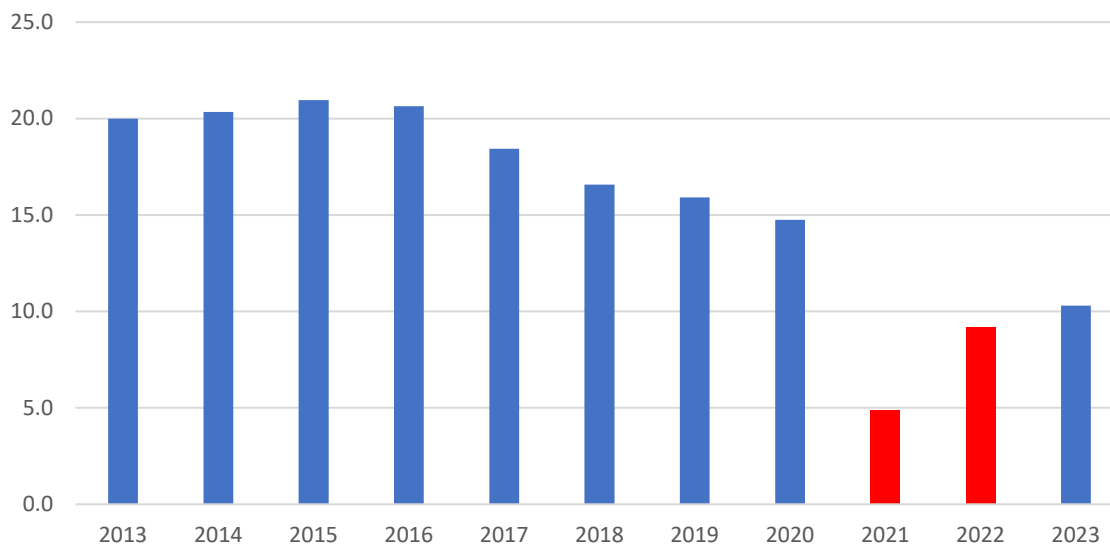
2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

Recovery in passenger journeys since COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, has been limited, increasing by just 11% between 2022 and 2023. Evidence shows that elderly and disabled passengers who in 2017, comprised half (50%) of all passenger journeys, now make up just over one third (34%).

The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on society and the economy, and the effect on travel demand and behaviours has been dramatic. Our Household Travel Survey, conducted in June 2023, found that before the pandemic, 35% of people worked from home, all or part of the time, and now it is 59%.

The pandemic also saw a rise in online shopping, which has remained high, meaning that fewer people are physically coming into our town centres and high streets to shop. In May 2022, internet sales accounted for 26.6% of all retail sales, compared with 19.7% in February 2020[7].

Table 10 provides an overview of bus stop patronage, and Appendix H details the stop-by-stop patronage levels in our main type 1 settlements.

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[7] How our spending has changed since the end of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, ONS, 11 July 2022.

Table 10: Bus Stop Use Across Staffordshire, September 2023

Number of Boarding Passengers	Number of Bus Stops
0	749
1-249	2,549
250 – 2,499	675
2,500 – 7,499	51
7,500 – 10,000	12
Over 10,000	13

The routes with the highest number of passengers in September 2023 are listed in Table 11. Whilst most are cross boundary, the passenger numbers relate to passengers boarding from within Staffordshire. This indicates how much Staffordshire's residents access jobs, education, and services from neighbouring authorities. It also highlights where a consistently high standard of bus services and infrastructure is required.

Table 11: The 10 Highest Patronaged Routes in Staffordshire

Route	Route Description
3/3A/4/4A	Hanley (City Centre) - Crewe (Bus Station) via Tunstall, Kidsgrove and Alsager Hanley (City Centre) - Talke Pits via Tunstall and Kidsgrove Hanley (City Centre) - Waterhayes via Festival Park, Newcastle and Chesterton Hanley (City Centre) - Kidsgrove via Festival Park, Newcastle, Chesterton and Talke Pits
25	Hanley (City Centre) - Keele (University) via Stoke Rail Station, Stoke and Newcastle
101	Hanley (City Centre) - Stafford (Rail Station) via Newcastle, Tittensor and Stone
110	Tamworth – Birmingham
9	East Midlands Airport & Gateway to Ashby, Swadlincote, Burton and Queens Hospital, Burton
74*	Cannock – Stafford
8*	Stafford – Parkside – Redhill – Stafford
X51	Birmingham – Walsall – Great Wyrley – McArthur Glen – Cannock
7*	Stafford – Moss Pit

* These routes are wholly within Staffordshire

2.14 Bus Users

As the 2021 Census was undertaken during one of the COVID-19 lockdowns, it cannot be relied upon for an accurate record of bus use. However, our Household Travel Survey, conducted in June 2023, is statistically robust. It found that 3% of people usually use a bus to travel to work; the highest numbers were in Type 1 and 3 settlements. Of those people in education, the percentage was much greater, at 13%. Other than for work and education purposes, other journey purposes are set out in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Journey Purpose of Bus Users in the Household Travel Survey, June 2023 (Excluding Education and Work)
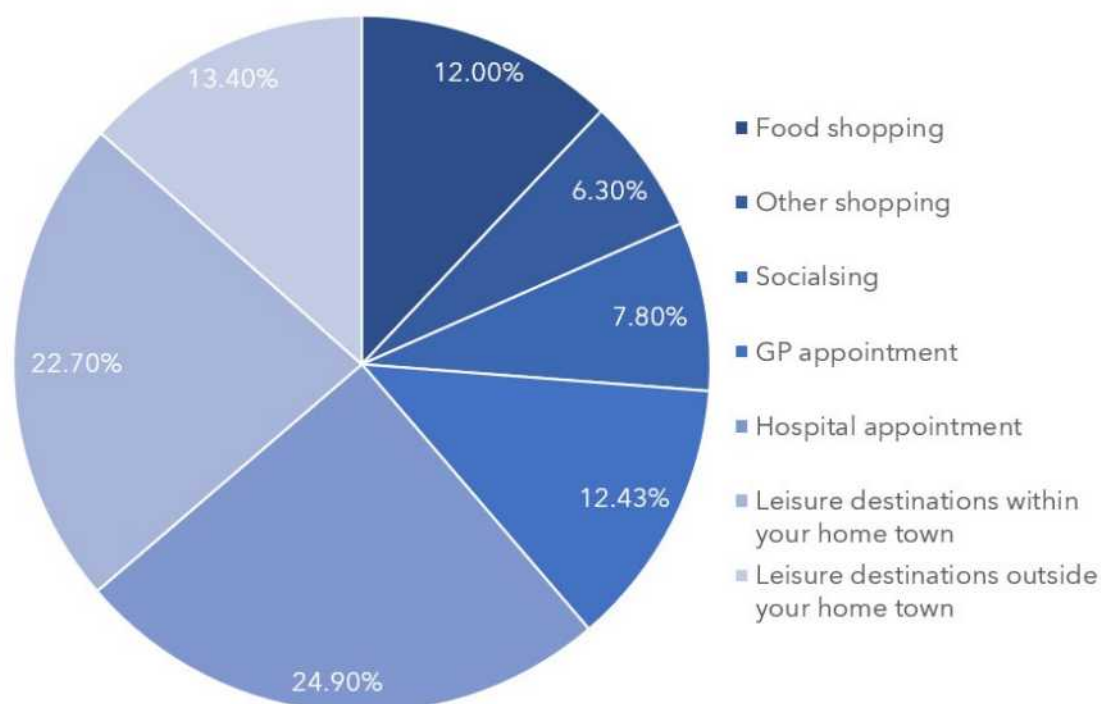
In 2021, AtkinsRealis conducted a Passenger Engagement Survey of 1,900 Staffordshire residents to understand their views on local bus services. It found that bus use was higher amongst younger people, respondents who had a concessionary bus pass and those who did not have regular access to a car. When asked why they travelled on the bus, those under 21 years of age, said education; those aged 22-to-54-years said, work and socialising; and those aged above 55 years said, shopping. Figure 17 shows the overall results as to why people travel on local buses.

Figure 17: Most Common Reason(s) for Travelling by Local Bus amongst Staffordshire's residents, 2021
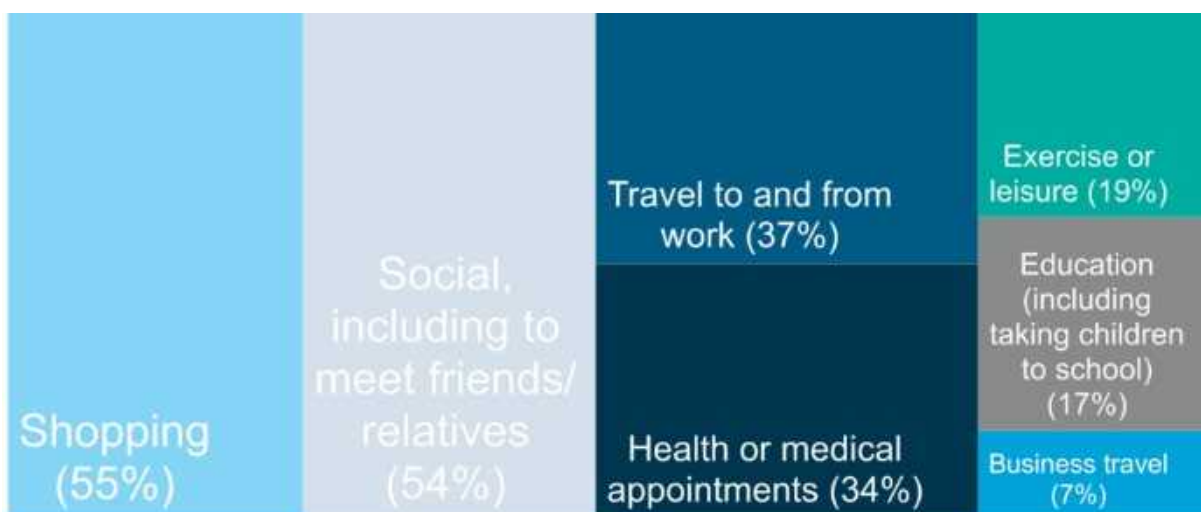
Bus users were asked how they felt regarding the safety, reliability, affordability, and accessibility of Staffordshire's bus services. The results can be seen in Figure 18. Of the four areas, affordability was given the highest negative response. Safety was given the highest proportion of favourable responses.

Figure 18: Bus Users' Views on Staffordshire's Bus Services, 2021
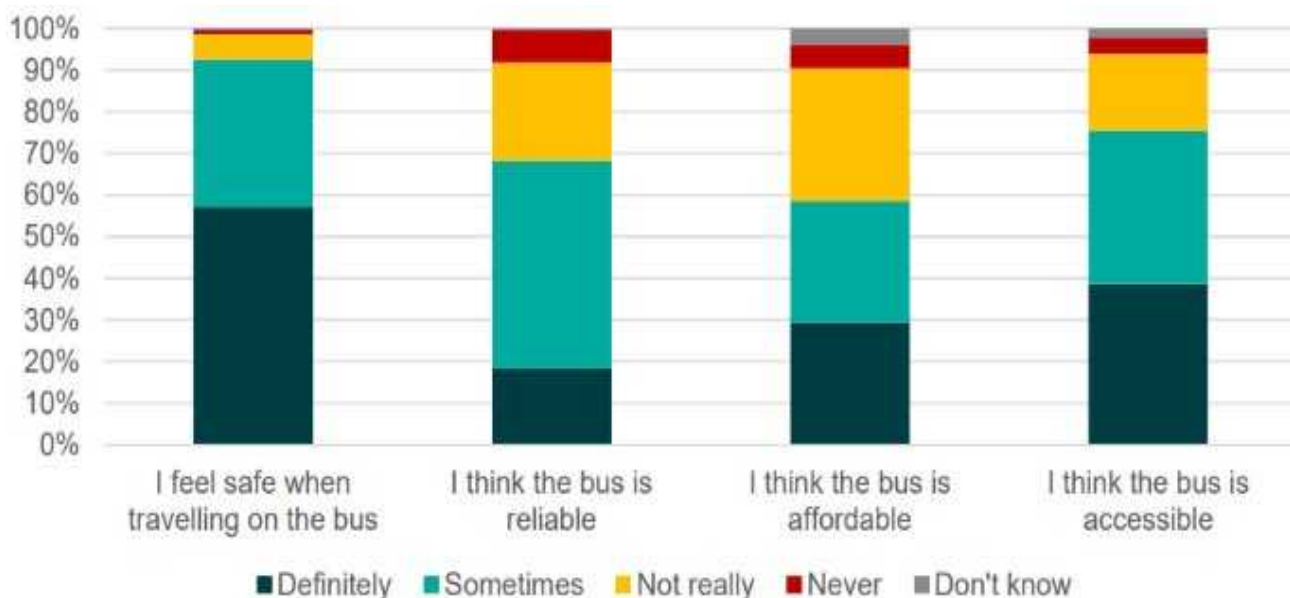
When asked what would increase their level of bus use, having RTPI at bus stops was seen most important, followed by improved bus reliability. All the results can be seen in Figure 19.

Figure 19: The Extent to which Certain Measures Would Increase Local Bus use in Staffordshire, 2021
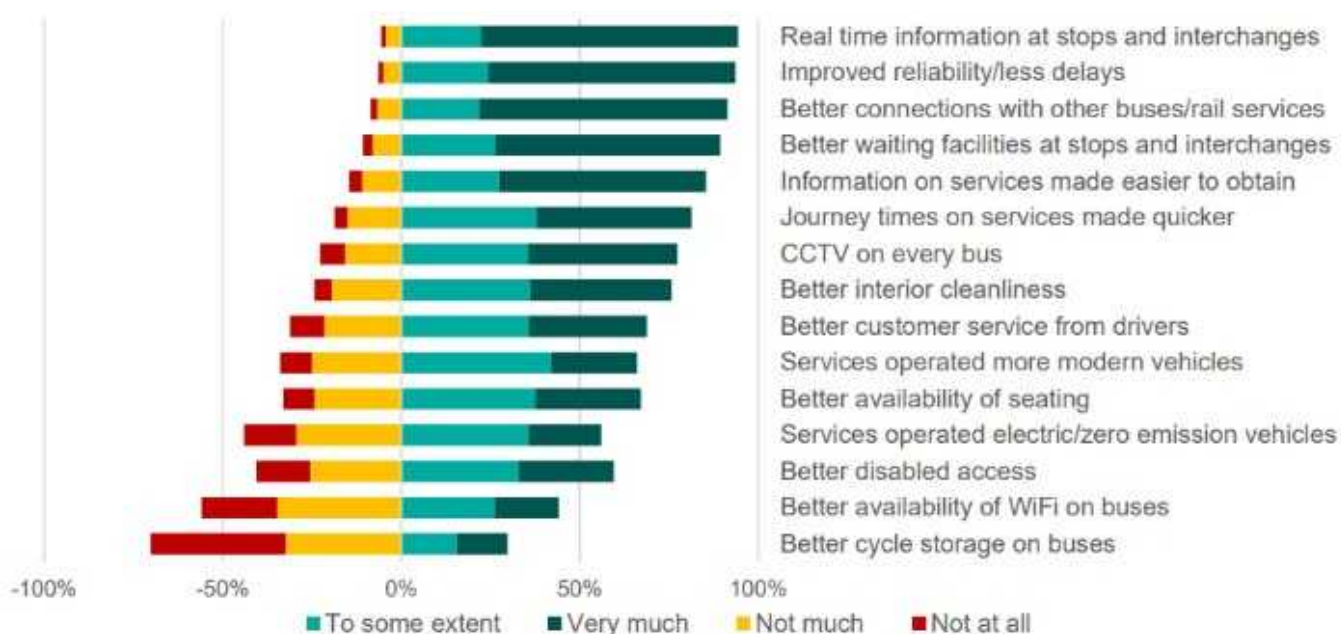
Compared to other local authorities with similar characteristics, Staffordshire has the lowest satisfaction score with regards to safety on bus services, yet it still has a slightly higher score than the regional average.

The 2023 NHT Public Satisfaction Survey includes 29 specific bus related questions and is an indication of people's experiences when using bus services[8]. Whilst specific indicators are referred to throughout this document, Table 12 summarises Staffordshire's results, compared to the regional and national averages. Staffordshire's public satisfaction scores are lower than the UK average for all categories apart from whether buses arrive on time.

Table 12: Results of the Bus Related Questions in the NHT Public Satisfaction Survey, 2023

Description	Staffordshire % Score	West Midlands % Score	UK Average % Score
CMQI04 - Informed about public transport	36	41	43
Theme Score - Public Transport (Local bus, information, taxi/mini cab, and community transport)	45	49	50
KBI 06 - Local bus services (overall)	49	55	54
KBI 07 - Local bus services (aspects)	40	43	47
KBI 08 - Public transport information	23	30	33
KBI 10 - Community Transport	52	55	54
KQI 03 - Responsive transport	49	52	51
KQI 05 - Public transport information (aspects)	46	48	50
PTBI 01 - Frequency of bus services	45	50	51
PTBI 02 - Number of bus stops	58	63	64
PTBI 03 - The state of bus stops	47	53	54
PTBI 04 - Whether buses arrive on time	50	47	48
PTBI 05 - How easy buses are to get on/off	65	67	69
PTBI 06 - The local bus service overall	49	52	54
PTBI 07 - Bus fares	53	51	54
PTBI 08 - Quality and cleanliness of buses	58	57	61
PTBI 09 - Helpfulness of drivers	64	63	66
PTBI 10 - Personal safety on the bus	62	60	65
PTBI 11 - Personal safety while waiting at bus stop	58	57	60
PTBI 12 - Raised kerbs at bus stops	61	60	63
PTBI 13 - The amount of information	46	49	50
PTBI 14 - The clarity of information	47	50	51
PTBI 15 - The accuracy of information	49	50	51
PTBI 16 - Ease of finding the right information	44	47	48
PTBI 17 - Information about accessible buses	42	46	46
PTBI 18 - Information to help people plan journeys	49	51	53
PTBI 19 - Reliability of electronic display info	46	47	47
PTBI 20 - Provision of public transport information	44	47	49
PTQI08 - Provision of bus stops	81	83	85

[8] The NHT Satisfaction Survey provides an indication of satisfaction levels rather than an accurate reflection. This is because some of the people who may have responded, may not be bus users.

2.15 Concessionary Travel

Staffordshire has the following concessionary travel schemes:

- An older person pass, allowing free bus travel from 0930 to 2300, Monday to Friday and at any time on weekends and bank holidays.
- A disabled person pass, allowing free bus travel at any time of the day, 7 days a week. This is an enhancement of the national concessionary fare scheme; and
- A companion pass, allowing free bus travel for a carer to accompany a disabled person or someone who cannot travel unassisted. This is a discretionary scheme provided by the County Council.

The number of concessionary passenger journeys made in Staffordshire each year has fallen significantly. Between 2013 and 2016, levels were constantly above 8 million. However, from 2017, numbers dropped steadily, until the COVID-19 pandemic, when numbers dropped to between 2 to 3 million. Whilst passenger journeys increased slightly in 2023, numbers are still well below where they have been as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Annual Concessionary Passenger Journeys in Staffordshire, 2012/2013 to 2022/23 (millions)
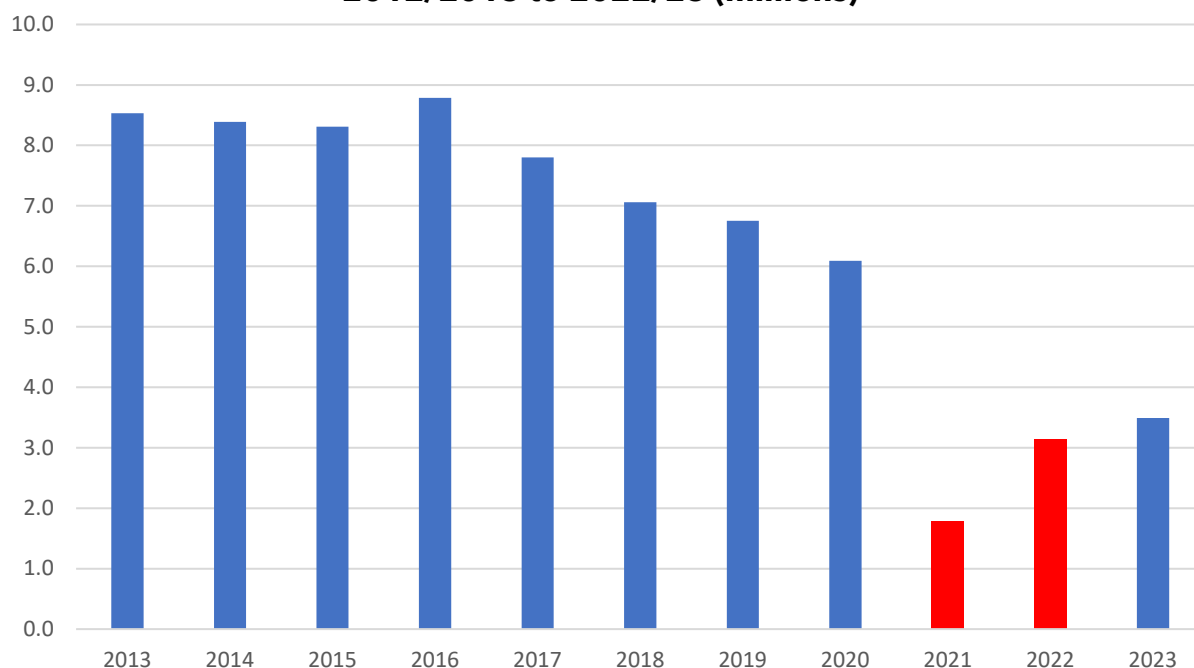
2021-2022 COVID restrictions in place

Just 5% of passholders have a disabled pass and of these, over one third (34%) are companion passes. Table 13 provides a breakdown of where concessionary passholders reside.

Table 13: Concessionary Passholders, June 2024

District	Disabled Passes*	Elderly Passes	Total Passes
Cannock Chase	826	11,244	12,070
East Staffordshire	1,030	13,962	14,992
Lichfield	677	14,165	14,842
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1,130	14,981	16,111
South Staffordshire	543	15,971	16,514
Stafford	1,016	17,497	18,513
Staffordshire Moorlands	580	13,007	13,587
Tamworth	921	10,633	11,554
Total	**6,723**	**111,460**	**118,183**

*Includes approx. 2,300 companion passes

The money spent on subsidising concessionary fare passes since 2020/21 is shown in Table 14. Whilst this sum has remained fairly constant, the annual concessionary passenger journeys undertaken between 2020 and 2023 has fallen considerably (Figure 20). One reason for this is that concessionary passholders are often the most vulnerable in society, and since the COVID-19 pandemic, they are less likely to use shared travel modes unless necessary.

Table 14: Revenue Expenditure on Concessionary Fares in Staffordshire, 2020/21 to 2023/24

	Year			
	2020/21	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**
Spend on Concessionary Fares	£6.9m	£7m	£6.7m	£6.3m

2.16 Passenger Safety

Bus travel remains one of the safest forms of road transport in the county. In 2021, Staffordshire had 6 road traffic collisions (RTCs) involving buses. These resulted in 5 slight and 3 serious injuries, and 1 fatality.

A safe bus network involves more than the number and severity of RTC injuries. For example:

- In towns, the footway to a bus stop could be blocked by badly parked cars or poorly maintained footpaths. For most people, these are an inconvenience, but for someone with a buggy, in a wheelchair or with a sensory disability, they can make the journey unsafe.
- In rural areas, there may be no footway to the bus stop; the road could be unlit and the stop could be isolated.
- In some places, cars are parked in bus stops, preventing buses from reaching the kerb, requiring passengers to walk into the carriageway.

As females make one third more bus journeys than males, it is vital that measures make female passengers, along with other passengers with protected characteristics, feel safe when travelling by bus. Making even small adjustments like transparent bus stops or moving bus stops to better lit locations with more natural surveillance can influence perceptions of safety.

> **Text Box 4: Safety of Women at Night (SWaN)**
> In November 2021, Staffordshire Police secured £300,000 from the Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) Fund. It aimed to improve women's safety in five Staffordshire towns. Initiatives focused on preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the night-time economy, in venues and on public transport. The SWaN bid was developed by the Staffordshire Police Commissioner's Office in conjunction with partners. It followed consultation with local women and girls in June 2021, which received around 1,500 responses and identified several measures which would make a real difference to their feelings of safety.

According to the NHT Public Satisfaction Survey 2023, compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 15th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with personal safety on buses. Staffordshire scored 62%, whereas the highest authority, scored 72%. Likewise, it also ranked 15th out of 15 regarding satisfaction with personal safety while waiting at a bus stop. Staffordshire scored 58%, whereas the highest authority, scored 67%. These results are surprising as Staffordshire Police have stated that crime on public transport is "very low".

2.17 Bus Reliability

There will always be unplanned situations that can delay a bus service, such as extreme weather conditions, accidents, and no-notice roadworks. But overall, bus services should be able to operate and run to their registered timetable.

The Department for Transport's Bus Open Data Service (BODS) provides data including timetable and reliability information. A few of our operators do not currently contribute towards this dataset due to costs. We estimate that approximately two-thirds of services are included within this dataset. Reliability data was extracted for September 2023 and was analysed to identify services operating within a window of 1 minute early and up to 5 minutes 59 seconds late, which are considered to be on time. Services outside of this window are unreliable. The percentage of journeys for each service across the month that was either reliable or unreliable is shown in Figure 21. Appendix I shows bus service reliability in each of the Type 1 settlements.

Two services were identified as frequently operating early, which will be addressed with the operators via the Enhanced Partnership.

Unreliable services were investigated further, and it was identified that many were related to extended periods of traffic management and beyond the control of operators. We are working through the Enhanced Partnership to improve the

planning and dissemination of information to operators regarding traffic management.

BODS data provides a figure for each bus service but does not identify where along the route the cause of the unreliability occurs. Therefore, it has been cross referenced with traffic delay data taken from TomTom. Buses are frequently subjected to the same congestion as other road traffic and TomTom data provides the geographical detail required to determine if interventions are appropriate. Normalised delay is the difference between the peak hour travel time for a link and the off-peak travel time divided by the link length, which enables comparison between sections of differing length.

Virtual bus priority can be achieved through traffic signal control and therefore can only be considered for areas of unreliability where signal-controlled junctions occur.

Figure 21: Bus Reliability in Staffordshire, September 2023

Less than 60% on-time		Settlement Boundary	
Less than 60% on-time due to early running		Data unavailable	
Between 60-80% on-time			
More than 80% on-time			

Scale: 1:399999

Source: DfT BODs data Septemeber 2023

Staffordshire County Council

Bus Reliability in Staffordshire

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Staffordshire County Council, 15/05/2024.
Aerial photography copyright Airbus 2024.

Thirteen percent of bus services in the county fall in the worst category for lateness i.e. running less than 60% on-time. Closer examination of these routes show that all were affected by roadworks, and some had diversions in place. For example, half of the services were in Burton town centre, where there were major roadworks taking place on the junction of Station Street and Union Street. Additionally, more than half of the services were cross boundary, which may indicate that delays are occurring outside of the county.

Over two thirds of bus services (69%) are running between 60 to 80% on time. Two thirds of these services (66%) travel into Type 1 settlements, where we know traffic can build up and delays can be more common, especially during peak travel periods. This is evidenced in Appendix I.

Four percent of local bus services depart at least 1 minute early on more than 30% of occasions. Closer examination of these services, reveal that they cease being local services and become school buses. In order to arrive at school on time, it may be that the bus driver feels they need to complete the local service quickly.

Compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is ranked 10th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with buses arriving on time. Staffordshire scored 45%, whereas the lowest authority scored 39% and the highest, 61%. This level of satisfaction is mirrored in the results of the Passenger Engagement Survey undertaken in 2021. This survey found that there were fewer positive responses in terms of bus reliability and most people thought that buses were only 'sometimes' reliable (Figure 18).

2.18 Staffing Resources

The Transport Operations and Future Connectivity Team will lead the delivery of the BSIP. The Head of this Team is accountable for the BSIP's delivery and the Senior Transport Coordinator (Local Bus & Community Transport), is responsible for its delivery. Whilst not exhaustive, other officers directly involved in the BSIP's delivery, along with their roles, are listed in Table 15.

An organisational structure, showing the relevant personnel from the Transport Operations and Future Connectivity Team is found in Appendix J. Other teams within the council that will support the delivery of the BSIP include:

- Street Lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems
- Traffic and Network Management
- Integrated Transport Projects
- Connectivity Strategy

Amey, our highways delivery partner, will be involved in works required on the highway; along with JMW, our RTPI provider; and Traveline.

Table 15: Officers directly involved in the delivery of the BSIP

Local Bus & Community Transport Team	Key Roles/Duties
Senior Transport Co-ordinator- Local Bus and Community Transport (1FTE)	• Responsible for the procurement of supported bus services and contract compliance. • Responsible for performance management of supported bus services. • Responsible for bus infrastructure and bus travel information. • Responsible for the running of the Bus Enhanced Partnership. • Main point of contact for bus operators.
Connectivity Project Officer – Infrastructure (1FTE)	• Leads efforts to enhance bus stops and bus travel information. • Leads the development and performance management of virtual and physical bus priority measures.
Connectivity Officer - Bus Infrastructure (1FTE)	• Supports the Connectivity Project Officer, focussing on provision and maintenance of bus stops.
Connectivity Information and Infrastructure Support Officer (1FTE)	• Supports the Connectivity Project Officer, focussing on information systems and provision and maintenance of bus stops.
Connectivity Officer - Projects (1FTE)	• Leads efforts to deliver measures set out in the BSIP.
Network Development Officer - Local Bus (1FTE)	• Leads efforts to effectively manage road closure to ensure minimal impact on the bus network.
Senior Transport Coordinator - Finance, Procurement and Compliance (1FTE)	• Responsible for the administration of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. • Responsible for the administration of disabled and assistance concessionary bus passes. • Responsible for contract compliance (schools), including in relation to vehicles and drivers.
Connectivity Officer - ENCTS (1FTE)	• Leads on the delivery of all concessionary bus travel schemes, including the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme • Manages the Transport DBS & Safeguarding Team.
Transport Contracts Officer (1FTE)	• Leads on the tendering of supported local bus services.
Finance Coordinator (2FTE)	• Supports the Transport Contracts Officer, focussing on reimbursing bus operators for supported services.
Finance, Procurement and Compliance	
Senior Transport Coordinator - Finance, Procurement and Compliance (1FTE)	• Responsible for the administration of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. • Responsible for the administration of disabled and assistance concessionary bus passes. • Responsible for contract compliance (schools), including in relation to vehicles and drivers.
Connectivity Officer - ENCTS (1FTE)	• Leads on the delivery of all concessionary bus travel schemes, including the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme • Manages the Transport DBS & Safeguarding Team.
Transport Contracts Officer (1FTE)	• Leads on the tendering of supported local bus services.
Finance Coordinator (2FTE)	• Supports the Transport Contracts Officer, focussing on reimbursing bus operators for supported services.

Section 3: Achievements since 2021/22

We published our first BSIP in October 2021 but were unsuccessful in securing the £113 million that we requested from Government to deliver its ambitions. We have since been allocated revenue grant aid to support bus travel in the county (Table 5).

In 2022/23, with over £1 million of revenue grant aid and £1.3 million of revenue core funding, we continued to fund the 34 local services that we supported during 2021/22. We also invested in 18 bus services that had become unviable due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 16). These were supported as they maintained the only bus services in certain areas or vital early and late services that provided access to and from employment. Three new bus services were introduced in 2023/24 as shown in Table 18, two of these were funded through Section 106 developer contributions.

Table 16: Previously Commercial Bus Services that Became Supported using Public Funds, 2022/23

Route	Description	Frequency	Contract or de minimus
32/32X	Hanley - Cheadle – Uttoxeter	Half-hourly	Contract
123	Cheadle Town Service	Hourly	Contract
1	Burton – Tutbury	Hourly	Contract
406	Uttoxeter Town Service	Half-hourly	Contract
23	Cannock - Wimblebury – Hednesford	Hourly	De minimus
67	Cannock - Featherstone – Wolverhampton	4 journeys a day	Contract
IN2	Forsbrook - Dilhorne – Cheadle	2 journeys a day	De minimus
30	Leek - Ipstones - Cheadle – Tean	2 journeys a day	De minimus
116	Leek – Cheddleton	3 journeys a day	Contract
165/6	Leek Town Service	Hourly	Contract
70	Cheslyn Hay – Wolverhampton	Hourly	Contract
71	Cheslyn Hay – Wolverhampton	Hourly	Contract
11	Burton - Anglesey Road	Hourly	Contract
12E	Burton – Lichfield	8 journeys a day*	Contract
62	Lichfield – Cannock	Hourly	Contract
101	Stafford - Hanley (evenings only)	Hourly	De minimus
5	Telford - Stafford evenings	Hourly	Contract
63	Cannock – Rugeley	Hourly	Contract

* 8 journeys a day in one direction and 6 in the other, Monday to Saturday. On Sundays, it is 8 journeys each way.

Table 17: New Supported Bus Services, 2022/23*

Route	Description
18	Hanley - Leek Sundays
1A	Audley - Wood Lane extension
7	Hanley - Kidsgrove Sundays
7A	Hanley - Biddulph Sundays
5	Wolverhampton - Codsall evenings / Sundays

* Funded through BSIP and SCC local bus budget.

In 2023/24, over £1.6 million of revenue grant aid and £1.6 million of revenue core funding was available to invest into local bus provision. Table 18 sets out the services that received funding following the withdrawal of commercial services, Table 19 sets out the existing services that were enhanced and Table 20 sets out completely new services that were introduced in 2023/24.

Table 18: New Supported Bus Services Awarded to Replace Withdrawn Commercial Services, 2023/24

Route	Description
1	Huntingdon – Great Wyrley**
11	Ventura Park – Tamworth – Dunstall Park*
405	Uttoxeter – Oliva Park*

* Section 106 developer funded.
** Funded through BSIP and SCC local bus budget.

Table 19: Enhancements to Existing Supported Bus Services, 2023/24*

Route	Description	Enhancement
31/32	Lichfield Northern circular	Extended service
2	Gillway - Tamworth - Ventura Park (S106)	Extended to include new housing estate
8 / 8A	Stafford – Parkside	Evening service added
9	Stafford – Highfields	Evening service added
875	Stafford – Penkridge	Evening service added
8A	Stafford - Pets at Home (S106)	Early morning added
101	Newcastle – Stafford	Early morning added
103	Eccleshall – Stone	Route amendment to serve Norton Bridge
94	Newcastle – Congleton	Saturdays added (Feb 2024)
8/8A	Stafford – Parkside	Extended operating hours
9	Stafford – Highfields	Evening service added
875	Stafford – Penkridge	Evening service added
101	Newcastle – Stone – Stafford	Early morning service added
103	Eccleshall – Stone	Route amendment to serve Norton Bridge
94	Newcastle – Biddulph – Congleton	Saturday service added

* Funded through BSIP and SCC local bus budget.

Table 20: New Supported Bus Services, 2023/24

Route	Description
95	Audley - Kidsgrove – Biddulph
830	Hill Ridware- Rugeley-Hednesford

* Funded through BSIP and SCC local bus budget.

In addition to socially and economically supported bus services, £610,000 was invested in developing real time bus passenger information (RTPI) throughout Staffordshire, as detailed in Chapter 2. Other notable successes since the first BSIP was published, include:

3.1 Burton Bus Lane Camera Enforcement, 2021/22

Figure 22: Bus Lane Camera Enforcement in Burton

This was a joint scheme with East Staffordshire Borough Council and the county council. It sought to help regenerate Burton town centre and control traffic flows within the pedestrian zone.

The existing bollards on the High Street were removed and replaced with ANPR cameras, new signage, and a bus gate. Nearby footways and carriageways were re-surfaced and bus stops upgraded, including new kerbs to ensure they were the correct height required for docking buses.

3.2 Rural Mobility Fund Award, 2021/22

We were successful in bidding for £1.038 million from the Rural Mobility Fund, which was invested into Moorlands Connect (Text Box 2). The funding helped to relaunch the service, with the introduction of a new scheduling system and mobile app for bookings, as well as 3 high specification, fully accessible minibuses.

3.3 Levelling Up Fund Award – Investing in Mid Staffordshire's Major Road Network, 2022/23

We were awarded £20 million for a package of three projects, focussing on the Major Road Network (MRN) in mid Staffordshire. They aimed to improve the lives of Staffordshire's residents whilst also driving prosperity in East Staffordshire, Cannock Chase District and Stafford Borough. Over £4.2 million was awarded to Project 3 for the delivery of bus priority, improving journey time reliability, and electric buses, serving the busy A511 Burton and A34 Cannock to Stafford corridors. This project will be delivered by 2025/26.

3.4 Section 106 contributions to support the X3, 2022/23

The National Express X3 bus service was extended to serve the development in 2022 using Section 106 developer funds. Through their travel plan, the developer has now gone on to promote the bus service by sharing bus information to residents and offering and funding free bus taster tickets. The success of their

travel plan is being monitored by the developer through residents' surveys with annual reports submitted to Staffordshire County Council.

3.5 Lower Outwoods Road Bus Lane in Burton, 2022/23

On Lower Outwoods Road in Burton, a bus lane was installed as part of the planning condition for the housing estate. It was intended to protect residents and ease traffic. However, following numerous complaints, a review was carried out and it was decided that the benefits to bus users were minimal and the bus lane was removed. This decision aligns to the Government's expectations that traffic management measures must have local support.

Section 4: Improvements programmed for 2024/25

We continue to build on the improvements we have made since 2021 to encourage people onto the county's local bus network. Our commitment is to help grow bus patronage and ensure existing routes are not withdrawn. Table 21 sets out the total budget that the County Council has available in 2024/25. It includes all funding sources and programmes, such as BSIP+ and external grants, such as Levelling Up Fund2 and ZEBRA2. The table excludes concessionary fare reimbursement.

Around 75% of the 2024/25 revenue budget is programmed for spend, with the remaining 25% reserved as a backup to manage current uncertainties and help ensure that no existing bus services need to be cut due to funding pressures.

Table 21: Budgets Available for Bus Services and Infrastructure, 2024/25

Source	2024/25 budget (£m)		
	Capital	**Revenue**	**Total**
Council's own resources	£245,000	£1,095,652	£1,220,652
Local Service Grant	-	£417,061	£417,061
DfT - BSIP+ (Phase 2)	-	£2,425,904	£2,425,904
DfT - BSIP (Phase 3, Network North)	-	£4,982,000	£4,982,000
Other Gov. department - Levelling Up Fund 2 (delivery 25/26)	£4,264,127	-	£4,264,127
Other Gov. Department & operator – ZEBRA2a	£9,236,686	-	£9,236,686
BSOG / Developer Contributions/ Bus Service Contributions	£200,000	£827,040	£1027,040
Newcastle Towns Fund	£840,000	£371,000	£1,211,000
Total	**£14,785,813**	**£10,118,657**	**£24,784,470**

The services currently programmed for investment in 2024/25 aim to grow bus patronage within all the county's districts by:

- Providing better connections between settlements, particularly on corridors not served by rail, and better connections to rail stations.
- Providing residents with better links to their town centres, education providers, jobs, and services.

- Complementing town centre economic growth proposals being delivered by District/Borough Councils through the Towns Fund, the Future High Street Fund, and the Levelling Up Fund.
- Increasing the number of residents in urban areas that live within 400m of at least an hourly bus service.
- Enhancing services along corridors that experience traffic delays to encourage modal shift from the car.
- Improving connectivity in areas of deprivation.
- Improving cross-boundary connections to Stoke-on-Trent and the West Midlands conurbation.
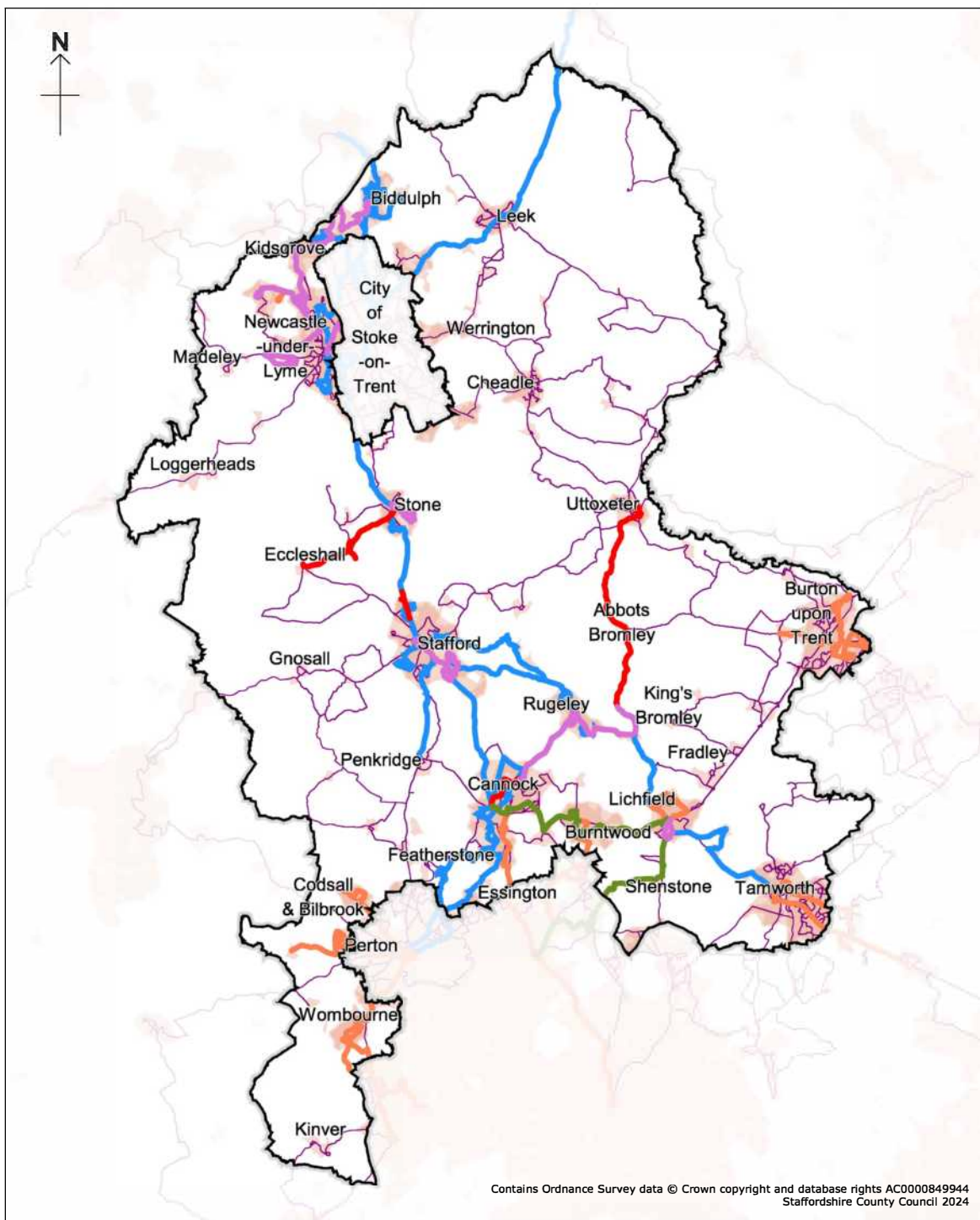
4.1 New supported bus services

Three new supported bus services will be introduced in 2024/25. These link villages and suburban housing estates to main town and village centres. Ahead of launching these services, publicity campaigns will take place. We are also working with the Enhanced Partnership to see if free travel can be offered for a limited period. We hope that such an incentive will kickstart the services, giving them the best chance of success and achieving modal shift. The new services are outlined in Table 22 and are mapped on Figure 23.

Table 22: New Bus Services Introduced or due to be Introduced in 2024/25

Route Description	Justification for service	Frequency
Baswich - Wildwood circular	• Improves local connectivity on a congested A34 corridor supported by LUF2. • Local access to jobs, education, retail, rail. • Supports Stafford growth proposals.	Monday- Saturday hourly
Stone Town Service	• Supports local access to jobs, rail, retail and leisure. • Increases numbers of residents with 400m of a bus service.	Monday- Saturday hourly
Newcastle- Wolstanton	• Improves links to college university hospital. • Supports Newcastle Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund. • Supports areas of deprivation. • Improves local services in a Type 1 settlement.	Monday- Saturday hourly

Eight additional bus services will be supported during 2024/25 to ensure that they are not withdrawn and continue to provide access to essential services. These are listed in Table 23.

Figure 23: New and enhanced supported bus routes and existing routes that have or will become supported, 2024/25

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Staffordshire County Council 2024

Legend	
New Route	Extended Route
Increased Frequency	Extended Operating Hours
Subsidy Support	Other Bus Network

Staffordshire County Council

2024/2025 Bus Service Enhancements

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and conditions shown at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/maps
Staffordshire County Council, 07/06/2024.
Aerial photography copyright Airbus 2024.

Scale: 1:400000

Table 23: Existing Bus Services that will Receive Financial Support, Starting in 2024/25

Route Number	Route Description
18	Hanley – Leek
1A	Audley - Wood Lane Extension
7	Hanley – Kidsgrove
7A	Hanley – Biddulph
5	Wolverhampton – Codsall
10	Burton- Rough Hay
17	Burton- Clay Mills
18	Burton-Dalebrook-Stapenhill

In addition, we are aware of other bus services that are at risk of being withdrawn as the operators are struggling to make them commercially viable. These are listed in Table 24.

Table 24: Existing Bus Services that are Likely to Require Financial Support During 2024/25

Route	Description
766	Tamworth - Birch Coppice
35 or 8	Walsall - Lichfield Replacement
10	Perton - Wolverhampton replacement
15	Wombourne - Merry Hill/ Stourbridge

4.2 Enhancements to existing bus services

Subject to final agreement with existing operators, where appropriate or tender responses are being received, we expect 12 existing bus services to be enhanced. The aim of these enhancements to support people into work, especially people who work shift patterns. These services are listed in Table 25 and mapped on Figure 23. They are expected to generate a 2% increase in patronage.

4.3 Fare Incentives

We are working with the Enhanced Partnership to devise a temporary fare incentive offer to kick-start the use of buses, stimulate modal shift away from private cars; generate economic benefits for our town centres and high streets, and make bus services more attractive to those on lower incomes. The details of this offer are yet to be decided but it will be implemented during 2024/25.

Table 25: Bus Service Enhancements to be Introduced During 2024/25

Route	Description	Enhancement
A53	Leek – Buxton	Extended operating hours
63	Uttoxeter – Rugeley – Hednesford - Cannock	Extended route
826/8	Stafford – Rugeley – Lichfield	Extended operating hours
74	Cannock – Stafford	Extended operating hours
60	Cannock – Chase Terrace – Burntwood – Lichfield	Extended operating hours & Increased frequency
93	Biddulph - Gillow Heath Circular	Extended operating hours
25/26	Cannock – Pye Green – Hednesford – Cannock	Extended operating hours
9	Biddulph – Hanley – Newcastle – Westbury Park	Extended operating hours
765	Lichfield – Tamworth	Extended operating hours
70/71	Cannock – Cheslyn Hay – Wolverhampton	Extended operating hours
2	Gillway - Tamworth - Ventura Park	Extended to include new housing estate
877/878	Stafford – Wolverhampton corridor	Complete corridor review

4.4 Electric Buses

Over £3 million of Government Zero Emission Bus Regional Area Funding 2 (ZEBRA 2) was secured in March 2024 to kickstart the decarbonisation of Staffordshire's bus fleet. Seventeen brand new, state-of-the-art buses will replace older diesel buses, running on Arriva's service 110, which runs from Tamworth to Birmingham, and Diamond Bus service 8/9, which runs between Burton, Swadlincote and East Midlands Airport. Not only will these buses be greener, quieter, and smoother, but they will also provide a better on-board experience as they have audio-visual displays, Wi-Fi and charging sockets.

In addition, electric buses will be introduced as part of our Levelling Up Fund 2 award including 2 buses on service 74 and 2 buses on service 875 (Cannock - Stafford).

4.5 Expanded Demand Responsive Transport Provision

As part of the countywide programme of enhanced services, the project area for Moorlands Connect will be expanded to include Cheadle, Denstone and Rushton Spencer. A new fare structure will also be introduced based on distance - one fare for journeys under 13 and one for over 13 miles. In so doing, we hope to encourage more shorter journeys, reducing 'dead mileage' and increasing its availability to more passengers.

4.6 Bus Passenger Charter

We will publish Staffordshire's Bus Passenger Charter. It will set out commitments to bus users regarding what they can expect when travelling on a bus in the county. The commitments will be agreed by the Enhanced Partnership and will cover many topics, including punctuality, cleanliness, information, and customer redress. At the same time, we want to work with Midlands Connect to explore the possibility of a regional Bus Charter. Having one Bus Passenger Charter to follow, rather than several, will be easier for those operators who run cross boundary services.

4.7 Review the Process of Evaluating Supported Bus Services

Rather than purely being based on price, we will work with the Enhanced Partnership to expand the criteria on which supported bus service tenders are scored. We would like to give weighting to wider BSIP outcomes such as customer care, vehicle emissions and on-board information provision.

4.8 Virtual Bus Priority

As part of our successful bid to the Levelling Up Fund, traffic signal upgrades and a new traffic management system will be introduced to give greater priority to bus services 8/9 along the A511 in Burton, and services 74/875 along the A34 in Stafford. Analysis of traffic flows show that for the latter, at one junction alone, there could be a saving of up to 30 seconds at peak travel times.

4.9 Newcastle-under-Lyme Towns Fund Project

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council was awarded £23.6 million via the Town Deal Fund to deliver a programme of investment to revitalise Newcastle town centre and help regenerate deprived communities. Around £1.2m was awarded for the delivery of a package of sustainable public transport solutions to be jointly delivered by the county and borough councils and Keele University. These include a new bus only exit, allowing buses to leave Keele University campus straight onto the A525 without travelling through the campus, RTPI and bus information totems. In addition, a fast bus service from Keele University to Newcastle will be introduced and a new service from Keele University to Silverdale, Knutton and Chesterton.

4.10 Journey Assistance Cards

A range of Journey Assistance Cards will be produced to improve the interaction between passengers with hidden disabilities and bus drivers. The Assistance Cards will reflect both physical and learning disabilities. The aim is to give these passengers the confidence to use buses and reduce the likelihood of them having a negative experience.

Figure 24: Example Assistance Card
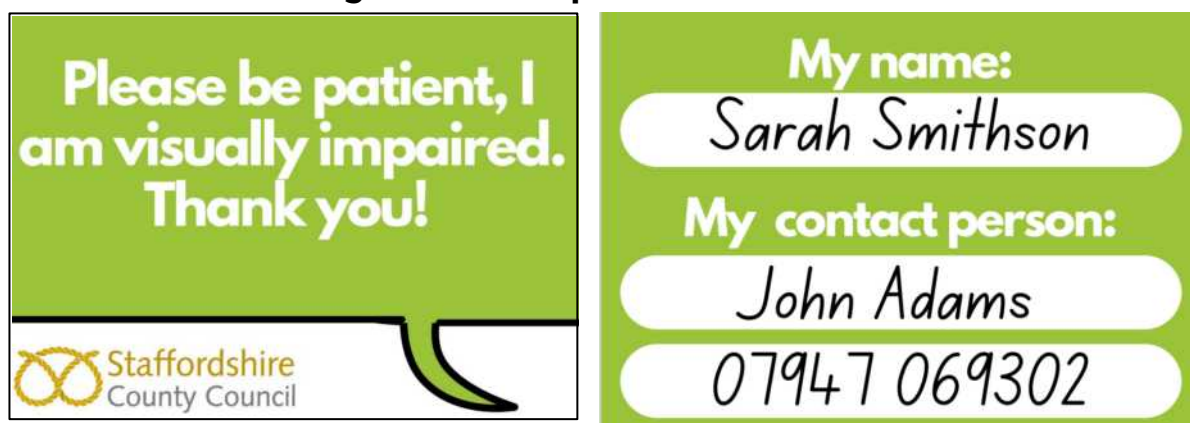
4.11 Bus Stop Upgrade Programme

We will complete the survey of all bus stops in the county and prepare a programme of upgrades from 2024/25 onwards.

4.12 Bus Information Totems

Five new sites will see RTPI totems installed this year, including at Newcastle, Leek and Uttoxeter Bus Stations. It is expected that ongoing support and maintenance of the totems will be funded by income generated from advertising.

4.13 Quick Response (QR) Bus Information

Figure 25: Staffordshire Bus Times QR Code

All bus stops in Staffordshire along the route of services 8/9 (Burton to East Midlands Airport) and routes 74/875 (Cannock to Stafford) will have QR codes displayed. QR codes are symbols that store data and when scanned, allow you to instantly access information stored within the code. Scanned with a smart phone, users are directed to a website, which shows real-time bus information.

4.14 RTPI Bus Stops

In 2022, two solar powered, in-shelter RTPI displays were installed adjacent to Burton Rail Station. During 2024/25, two further solar RTPI displays will be installed at Wall Island in Lichfield. RTPI and bus stop upgrades will be delivered along the Major Road Network in Burton, Cannock, and Stafford as part of the Levelling Up Fund 2 project, including an £80,000 Section 106 contribution.

4.15 Living Bus Shelters

Staffordshire's first living bus shelter will be installed in Stafford, funded by the council's Climate Change Team. It will have plants growing on its roof, which will contribute to climate resistance by absorbing rainwater and reducing the 'Urban Heat Island Effect'; it will capture particulates from the air; and help make the stop

4.16 Public Transport and the Rural Visitor Economy

Midlands Connect is commissioning research to look at public transport and the rural visitor economy. It will focus on several locations throughout the region, including the Staffordshire Moorlands and specifically, Alton Towers Resort. We will support this research and hope to use its insight to inform future delivery.

Section 5: Ambitions for 2025-2050, and Priorities for Bus Service Improvements from 2025/26 to 2028/29

To meet the goals of the National Bus Strategy and the BSIP's vision, we must adopt a more proactive role when working with Staffordshire's bus operators and other partners, than we have in the past.

This section sets out our ambitions for improving the county's bus network to 2050 – aligning with the emerging Staffordshire LTP. The objectives are summarised in Table 26, together with how they link to the National Bus Strategy The teams that will be responsible for its delivery are detailed in Table 15.

Table 26: The BSIP's Ambitions

Long Term Ambitions to 2050	Contribution to the National Bus Strategy
Buses take people where they want to go, at a time that is right for them	• More frequent • More comprehensive • Better integrated with other modes and each other
Bus journeys are expeditious and run on-time	• Faster and more reliable
Bus fares are simple to understand and cheaper than car travel	• Cheaper
Ticketing is seamless between bus services and integrated across transport modes	• Better integrated with other modes and each other
Bus passengers have a strong voice and influence regarding how the bus network runs	• Innovative
Bus infrastructure is accessible, safe and well-maintained	• Seen as a safe mode of transport
Bus information is widely available, in various formats, and accessible to all users	• Easier to understand
Buses are accessible, zero emission, with high-quality on-board environments	• Easier to use • Better to ride on • Greener • Accessible and inclusive design

Specific actions are proposed for 2025/26 to 2028/29 to help achieve our objectives and set us on the path to delivering the BSIP's vision. These have been informed by analysis of passenger numbers and alighting points, bus accessibility levels and journey reliability, fare structures and use of concessionary fares, as well as provision of bus information and views of bus passengers.

The specific actions have been assessed to ensure that they are realistic, affordable, and represent value for money. They have been guided by the

Government's Transport Analysis Guidance[9], Small Schemes Appraisal Toolkit[10], and the Bus Centre of Excellence[11].

Delivering the actions is dependent on available funding, the delivery of related schemes, key decisions being made, and the readiness of bus operators. Like the rest of the BSIP, these actions are live and will be continually reviewed in light of additional data and insight, new funding streams, operators' business plans, advances in technology, etc.

A Theory of Change Model is found in Appendix K. It explains how the proposed actions (for 2025/26 to 2028/29) will lead to more people choosing to travel by bus as their preferred form of transport.

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[9] Transport analysis guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[10] Small scheme appraisal toolkit user guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[11] Bus Centre of Excellence

Objective 1: Bus services take people where they want to go, at a time that is right for them

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Continued support for bus service improvements at the same level as 2024/25. The bus services identified for support will be reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to contribute to the goal of increasing bus patronage, proportionate to the level of investment needed. Revenue support may be removed, or moved to another service, if value for money is not being achieved or if there is the potential for the service to be run commercially.
- New and improved services may be added, based on patronage data analysis. This could include a town circular in Lichfield and improved frequencies on the Lichfield – Tamworth and Stafford – Cannock (via Penkridge) corridors.
- Seek opportunities to introduce new shared transport solutions and Demand Responsive Transport schemes to serve settlements that are unable to support fixed bus services.
- Pilot a Mobility Hub, providing a range of smart mobility services including, a car-share scheme; electric car, e-bike and e-scooter hire; and integration into the local bus network. The current location being explored is Keele University where levels of sustainable travel is high and car ownership is low.

Enhanced Partnership Asks

- Actions to increase patronage on existing routes.
- Recruit and retain bus drivers and technical staff. The details are still to be agreed but the involvement of the Jobcentre, the Careers Advice Service, schools, and colleges is vital.

Land Use Planning Asks

- Ensure that new developments are served by high frequency bus services. Every opportunity will be taken to align bus services to shift patterns of large employers and business parks.

Visitor Attraction Asks

- Promote and incentivise bus travel to their attractions.

Table 27: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative cost (£)
Continued support for bus services	• Gives more time to establish good travel habits. • Continues to serve and retain more bus passengers. • Continues to provide an alternative to car travel, particularly along corridors that experience traffic delays. • Targeting investment in settlement types that are likely to achieve the greatest patronage growth, proportionate to the level of investment needed. • Improved bus connectivity to jobs, education and services. • Better cross boundary bus connections on inter-urban corridors that are not served by rail. • Improves cross-boundary connections to Stoke-on-Trent. • Investment in services that support District and Borough Council economic growth proposals through Towns Fund, Future High Street Funds and Levelling up Funds. • Better connectivity to rail stations. • Better connectivity to Strategic Development Locations, particularly Stafford. • Bus service provision for our 25% most deprived areas and areas of low car ownership. • Increased number of residents in urban areas that live within 400m of at least an hourly bus service.	£24m
Opportunities sought to introduce new shared transport solutions and Demand Responsive Transport services	• Runs only when there is demand and on an optimised route, it may travel fewer miles overall, reducing fuel consumption. • Provides an almost door-to-door service that can support individuals with limited mobility. • Helps individuals and communities to access job opportunities, which may be better suited to shift patterns. • Acts as a feeder service to existing bus and/or rail services. • Consolidates existing bus services by one service meeting multiple needs e.g. home to school, healthcare and work. • Provides access to a wider range of destinations, increasing personal mobility, access to services, and reducing social isolation. • Enables travel at a more convenient time, compared to a fixed timetable with limited frequency.	TBC
Keele University Mobility Hub Pilot	• Supports the prioritisation of sustainable transport modes. • Improves health and well-being of residents. • Supports the development of an integrated and inclusive public transport network. • Improves public realm. • Raises the profile of shared services. • Helps tackle the rising cost of living.	£5m

Long term Vision to 2050

In more densely populated areas, we want high frequency services during the day and more evening services on main corridors, supported by good frequencies on other urban and inter-urban routes. A key element of this is to connect bus services with transport interchanges and Mobility Hubs.

> **Text Box 5: Mobility Hubs**
> Mobility Hubs provide a range of smart mobility, commercial and employment services, tailored to the needs of that area. They could include EV charging points, remote delivery lockers, shared cycle and car hire, secure bike storage and collaborative workspaces. They aim to improve the attractiveness and convenience of sustainable mobility relative to car travel.

In more sparsely populated areas, more innovative services are likely to be the norm. The type of services might include demand responsive transport services, community transport schemes, car clubs, shared cycle schemes, and mobility hubs.

Visitors to the county who are accessing jobs, education, services, and attractions will use bus or rail as their preferred mode of travel. This will be because public transport will connect to the county's main destinations. In addition, infrastructure and information at the destinations will be improved, and they will incentivise bus travel.

Bus drivers will be well trained and therefore be able to deal with all situations that may present themselves. Operators will have procedures that allow drivers to contact the depot in the case of an emergency, and buses will be fitted with CCTV. Fears over personal safety will not be a barrier to someone entering the bus driving profession.

To guide us in the level of service expansion required, we will work with the Enhanced Partnership to identify realistic, yet stretching, service standards for the different settlement types found in Figure 1 and Appendix C, together with their frequency and passenger numbers.

Objective 2: Bus journeys are expeditious and run on-time

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Deliver virtual bus priority on routes identified by bus reliability and traffic delay data. This is expected to include:

  - ➢ Union Street, Burton;
  - ➢ Birmingham Road, Lichfield; and
  - ➢ partnership working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to improve bus reliability in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

- Facilitate a new developer funded bus gate in Stafford between the Burleyfields Strategic Development Site and Doxey to deliver improved bus connections to the town centre for new and existing residents.

Enhanced Partnership Asks

- Regularly review registered bus timetables against actual running timings, encouraging the registration of realistic timetables.
- Have full and regular contact with us and other parties, which may help to get advance notice of potential disruption to services, such as roadworks.
- Ensure that no services run early.
- Develop climate mitigation and adaptation plans, ensuring operational performance standards are maintained even during extreme weather events such as flooding and high winds.

Table 28: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Deliver virtual bus priority	- Supports economic prosperity in terms of access to jobs and services. - Reduces emissions and improve fuel efficiency. - Reduces traffic congestion. - Optimise their use to ensure other road users can benefit from them.	£0.4m
New bus gate between Burleyfields and Doxey, Stafford	- Makes bus travel a convenient and expeditious mode of transport from the outset of the estate being occupied. - No cost to the public purse as it is being delivered by the developer.	Nil

Figure 26: Location of Burleyfields Bus Gate in Stafford
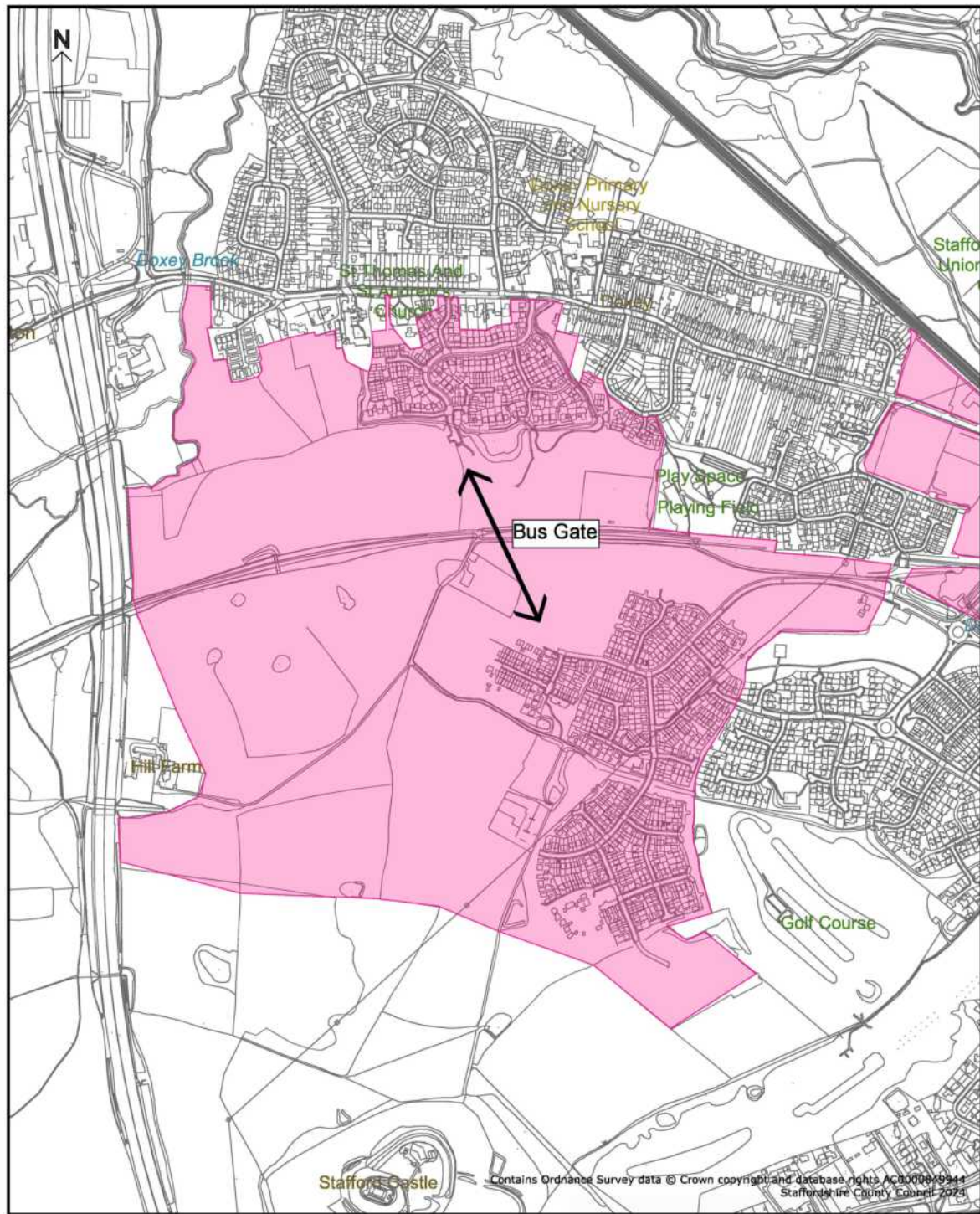
Housing sites

Burleyfields Bus Gate

Scale: 1:8300

Long term Vision to 2050

Our ambition is to deliver virtual bus priority where necessary, contributing to faster journey times, improved bus reliability, enhanced vehicle efficiency, and operational savings. Two-way communication between the bus and signal will optimise the signal phasing, resulting in the bus reaching the signal on green.

Car drivers must not be unduly hampered by the presence of bus priority. Therefore, systems will include exit detectors to cancel the green signal as soon as the bus passes through. They must also provide a differential priority to buses depending on their headway, route priority and schedule. Where necessary, bus priority technology will also be added to Pelican, Toucan and Puffin pedestrian crossings.

Direct bus priority measures, such as bus lanes and gates, will be less common and only installed where new bus capacity can be created without significantly removing capacity from the existing highway.

The ongoing monitoring of bus reliability and traffic delay data is vital where bus priority measures are in use.

Long term Vision to 2050

Objective 3: Bus fares are simple to understand and cheaper than car travel

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Re-introduce a Young Person's Travel Card, extending the age to 25 years old, benefiting young people beyond education and into employment.
- Introduce fare promotions with the support of the Enhanced Partnership. The details of this have yet to be finalised.

Text Box 6: Your Staffordshire Card

Your Staffordshire Card was a young persons' bus discount card that ran from 2011 to 2019. It sought to address a lack of competitive bus fares for 11 to 19-year-olds. It consisted of a flat £1 fare for all cardholders and was accepted by all Staffordshire bus operators. At its height in 2014, there were 35,000 card holders, of which 63% were aged 16-19, and 2.4m bus journeys being made. Lessons have been learnt from this scheme and new technology means that its administration can be undertaken easier, quicker, and cheaper.

The new scheme will be available to 16 to 25 year-olds, meaning they can access education as well as their first jobs. This will instil good travel behaviour. It is estimated that over 34,000 card holders will make approximately 640,000 peak period and 1,600,000 off peak bus trips per year. Both mobile phone and physical cards will be available to users, and the use of a digital purse function is being explored, which can be topped-up online and in local shops.

Enhanced Partnership Asks

- Joint marketing and promotion of fare offers and the benefits of bus travel, especially in relation to it being cheaper than running a car.
- Lead on, and fund, additional discounts for group travel, encouraging families to see bus travel as a cheaper, less stressful alternative to the car.
- Develop a range of fare incentives to encourage bus use, such as every sixth journey is free.
- Work with neighbouring Enhanced Partnerships – in Stoke-on-Trent, the West Midlands and Derbyshire – to explore a cross-boundary fare scheme to make bus travel simpler for those passengers crossing the boundary to access employment, further and higher education, cultural activities, and secondary health care provision.

Land Use Planning Asks

- Ensure the promotion and incentivisation of existing bus services, including bus ticket offers, is contained in all Travel Plans that are prepared through the planning process; and where possible, improvements are secured through Section 106 agreements, such as RTPI or Bus Shelter upgrades.
- Ensure the availability and price of car parking makes car use less attractive when compared to bus travel (and active travel modes). This includes the use of maximum parking standards.

Text Box 7: Incentivisation of Bus Travel through the Planning Process
A travel plan is a package of measures aimed at encouraging sustainable access to larger housing and employment sites. It tends to be a condition of planning, although they can also be produced voluntarily to address specific issues (e.g. congestion, car parking, recruitment and retention) or support expansion plans.

As the highway authority, the council ensures that travel plans are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely – and monitors their implementation to ensure delivery. Over half (52%) of travel plans require developers to offer residents/employees free bus taster tickets so that sustainable travel behaviours can be instilled from the outset of a new development.

Table 29: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Young Person's Travel Card	• Aligns to the age range for a young persons' rail card. • Cost savings for young people and their families. • Reduces inequalities and supporting the levelling up agenda. • Supports access to jobs and education. • Helps to address the impacts of the pandemic on young people. • Removes anxiety or worries around the cost of travel. • Increases freedom and independence of young people. • Embeds good travel behaviour from an early age, delaying the time, or removing the need, for car ownership.	£3m
Fare Promotions	• Makes bus travel more financially attractive to existing passengers. • Encourages non-bus users to give bus travel a go, which may help to kickstart passenger growth. • Supports access to jobs and education. • Encourages less car trips.	£5m

Long term Vision to 2050

Our long-term vision is that bus travel becomes cheaper than car ownership. We want to rebalance prices to incentivise public transport over car use. We also want an easy to understand, fair and consistent fare structure across the county. This will benefit bus passengers, giving them greater clarity and certainty regarding what they need to pay. It will also benefit non-users, giving them the confidence to travel by bus for the first time.

Where possible, there will be travel schemes to give disadvantaged (e.g. jobseekers and care leavers) and worthy groups (e.g. emergency services' workers and armed services veterans) more financial support when travelling by bus.

Local businesses and major trip generators (e.g. tourist attractions), will see the commercial and societal benefits of offering discounts to people who travel by bus. For example, the National Trust in Surrey, offer £1 off in their cafés if a bus

ticket – that has been purchased on the same day – is presented. Not only does this support the Trust's corporate social responsibility agenda, it also generates additional spend in their cafés.

Reducing the price of fares and simplifying the fare structure is one angle; and increasing the cost and inconvenience of unsustainable forms of travel is another. Bold car parking strategies are needed to ensure that bus travel is more attractive than car use in terms of time, cost, and reducing congestion and vehicle emissions. We will regularly benchmark the 'real' cost of parking in our town centres versus the cost of bus travel and inform the district and borough councils of our findings.

Objective 4: Ticketing is seamless between bus services and integrated across transport modes

Proposal for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Continue to invest in, promote and expand the Knot ticket, and encourage all bus operators to accept it. Explore the possibility of expanding the range of Knot tickets to include weekly, monthly and annual travel, and the potential introduction of young person and group tickets.

Enhanced Partnership Asks

- All operators accept the Knot ticket and continue to promote it as it makes bus travel less confusing for passengers, especially new bus passengers.

Midlands Connect Asks

- Draw on our knowledge and expertise to help in the development of a national (excluding London) multi-operator, 'tap and cap' ticketing solution.

> **Text Box 8: Multi-operator Ticketing System**
> Midlands Connect is a key partner in designing a national multi operator, contactless, capping ticketing system (excluding London). The system will be accessible to any operator, at any time; create a national standard that supports inclusivity; encourage modal shift and bus passenger growth; and deliver on the fair price promise.
>
> Initially, it is focussing on bus and tram travel, but there are plans to roll it out to include other modes, such as rail and shared cycle hire.

Table 30: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
The Knot Ticket	- Encourages bus use, especially those on low-income. - Removes the need to buy multiple tickets if travelling on multiple operators' routes. - Passengers may feel greater affiliation with the Knot Ticket, unlike operator specific tickets. - Faster boarding times. - Cost savings for bus passengers - Never pay more than the cap.	£0.04m

Long term Vision to 2050

Our long-term vision is the widespread use of a single, fully integrated, and intuitive digital ticket, which can be used across all modes – buses, shared cycle and car schemes, trains, and taxis. In so doing, users will have complete flexibility to choose the most suitable mode of transport for each leg of their journey. This will have positive impacts beyond increasing bus patronage as it also creates a practical alternative to car dependency and ownership.

Objective 5: Bus passengers have a strong voice and influence regarding how the bus network runs

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- An annual bus passenger survey is to be conducted to measure passenger satisfaction with bus services.
- Opportunities where bus passengers, especially those from vulnerable groups, can engage with operators to let them know their experiences and what they would like to see improved. Opportunities may include a Bus Users' Forum, open days, roadshows, and community events.

> **Text Box 9: Bus Passenger Survey**
> We will commission Transport Focus – the independent watchdog for transport users – to conduct bus user surveys on an annual basis throughout the county. They will question at least 1,000 bus users throughout the year on a range of topics such as punctuality and value for money. The results will be a key metric in monitoring and evaluating progress towards the BSIP's ambitions.

Ask of the Enhanced Partnership

- Support and engage with events where bus passengers can share their experiences and where they can share their plans, ambitions, and good practice.

Table 31: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Annual Bus Passenger Survey	- Covers many aspects of bus travel, including the information provision, the bus stop, the bus driver, value for money, etc. - Greater response from bus users than existing engagement channels. - Ongoing data collection, throughout the year. - Creates metrics that can be used to set targets and benchmark against other local authorities.	£32,770
Bus Users Forum and/or Bus Roadshows	- Influences future investment. - Helps to manage expectations and build consensus. - Shows that passengers' views are valued and being listened to.	Nil

Long term Vision to 2050

Our long-term vision is that bus passengers will be given a greater say in how the county's bus services operate. Indeed, we want them to hold us to account if we fail to deliver on the BSIP's ambitions or fall below the standards set out in the Bus Charter.

We will be better informed regarding who and why people don't use buses or won't use them at certain times of the day. We will be better informed regarding

the issues faced by people with physical, sensory, and learning disabilities. Steps will be taken to ensure that they are given the same access to bus travel as everyone else and all bus passengers will be able to travel confidently and easily.

Objective 6: Bus infrastructure is accessible, safe and well-maintained

### Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Support Lichfield District Council with their proposals for providing City centre bus provision as part of the development of the Birmingham Road site.
- Refurbish Leek Bus Station to support Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's £17 million Levelling Up Fund award.
- Improve accessible and inclusive walking links and footpath upgrades to Cannock and Stafford bus stations to support Cannock Chase Council's £20 million Levelling Up Fund award and Stafford Borough Council's town centre growth proposals.
- Improve walking routes and bus stops in the vicinity of Kidsgrove and Stafford rail stations to support Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Towns Fund programme and Stafford Borough Council's town centre growth proposals.
- Deliver bus stop upgrades at Staffordshire's busiest stops, based on the analysis of annual patronage data, in line with recommended standards included in Table 32. The busiest stops, where upgrades are being considered are shown in Appendix F.
- Improve walking and wheeling routes to bus stops in Leek, Rugeley, Kidsgrove, Biddulph, Burntwood and Chase Terrace, in line with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Text Box 10: Lichfield Bus Station Provision

Lichfield District Council is looking to relocate the City's bus station as part of their Birmingham Road site regeneration plans. The site is on the edge of the city centre and adjacent to the rail station. We are in discussions with the district council to ensure suitable public transport infrastructure is provided and offers attractive sustainable transport opportunities. We are wanting to maximise opportunities to create good integration between transport modes, whilst also supporting the City's economic vibrancy and the visitor economy.

Several options are being considered, including the reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing bus station, which would be funded by the developer and include enhanced passenger waiting and driver welfare facilities, improved service information and capacity for coach parking. Alternative options include, accommodating buses (and any future growth) on the highway at a number of locations across the city; and accommodating services utilising a blend of local land assets owned by the county council and identified on-highway options. Figure 27 shows ones of the options being investigated.

Figure 27: Lichfield District Council's Proposed plan for Lichfield Bus Station
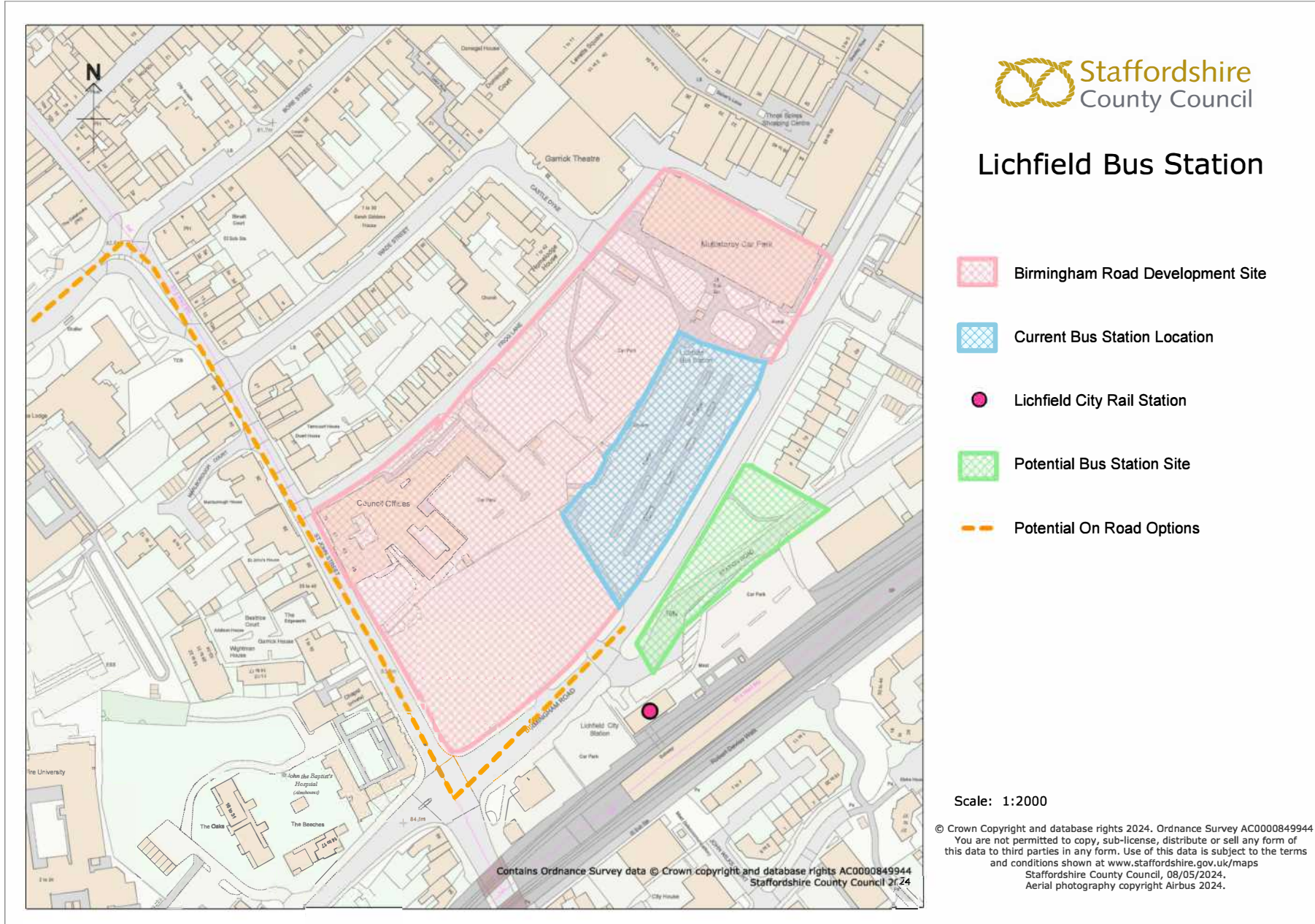
Land Use Planning Asks

- Ensure all new developments enable and encourage bus travel.
- Developer funding and other local funding sources are secured for bus services and bus infrastructure improvements.
- Local parking strategies do not undermine the improved quality and attractiveness of bus services.
- Bus shelters and stations are of a high quality, inclusive and accessible.
- Bus service and infrastructure enhancements are recognised and included in the local planning process.
- From the outset, work with developers to ensure layouts make it easy to steer a bus through a development and bus stops are accessible and within walking distance of residents and are to the highest quality.

Table 32: Draft Minimum Standards for Bus Stops

Type of Bus	Feature						
	QR Code	Raised Kerb	Shelter	Seating	Lighting	Integrated RTPI	Free Standing Totem
Interchanges and stations	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Frequently used	-	X	X	X	X	X	-
Moderately used	-	X	X	-	-	X	-
Infrequently used	X	X	-	-	-	-	-

Table 33: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Lichfield City Centre Bus Provision	- Enables the regeneration of part of the city centre. - Creates a modern, accessible, state-of-the-art bus station. - Makes bus travel a more attractive option. - Supports sustainable tourism travel into the City and beyond.	£3.5m
Refurbishment of Leek Bus Station	- Complements the regeneration of the town centre. - Creates a modern, accessible, state-of-the-art bus station. - Makes bus travel a more attractive option. - Supports sustainable tourism travel into the town and beyond.	£0.5m
Accessibility to Cannock and Stafford Bus Station	- Supports Cannock Chase Council's Levelling Up Fund 1 town centre regeneration proposals. - Supports Stafford Borough Council town centre growth proposals and recent Future High Street Fund investment. - Supports Staffordshire County Council's Levelling up Fund 2 and Active Travel Fund investment. - Enables safer, more convenient, and accessible environment along Staffordshire's Major Road Network with Cannock and Stafford. - Encourages greater levels of walking and wheeling.	£2m

Walking routes between bus and rail services in Kidsgrove and Stafford	• Complements the Kidsgrove Town Deal, which sees £16.9m invested into measures to regenerate the town. • Complements the Stafford Station Gateway project, which sees £20m of Levelling up Funding being invested into a brownfield site next to the railway station. • Encourages modal shift away from car travel as it increases connectivity and integration between sustainable travel modes. • Increases levels of physical activity. • More cost effective than driving.	£0.75m
Bus stop upgrades at Staffordshire's busiest stops	• Supports the retention of existing bus users and encourages new users. • Enhances user satisfaction at the first point of contact between the passenger and the bus service. • Ensures the space, location, design and condition of the bus stop significantly improves a passenger's experience. • Ensures that minimum standards are delivered at all bus stops in line with Table 32.	£1m
Improved walking and wheeling routes to bus stops in line with the LCWIP	• Safe and well-lit walking environment to bus stops, including crossing facilities. • Well-maintained footways in the vicinity of bus stops so that someone with a buggy, in a wheelchair or with a sensory disability can make the walking element of the bus journey safely. • Easy unobstructed access to and from bus stops.	£3m

Long term vision to 2050

Our long-term vision is to have accessible, well-maintained, and safe transport infrastructure. The infrastructure will be designed to a high and consistent standard, commensurate with the route that it is serving, and the accessibility benefits it can achieve. Bus infrastructure will be located close to key facilities and in walking distance of other travel interchanges.

Bus infrastructure will be easily identifiable with a common brand for the whole network, and additional town/district/route branding. This will raise awareness, build an emotional attachment, and create community ownership.

All bus stops will be DDA compliant. The area and footpaths surrounding bus stops will be well-maintained, free from clutter, allowing easy unobstructed access to and from the stop. The stops themselves will also be free from clutter that might potentially prevent passengers from boarding and alighting. Tactile paving, raised kerbs, slip-resistant finishes and way-finding, will be commonplace. Buses will be able to stop parallel to, and as close to the kerb as possible, which will allow for the effective use of the bus facilities such as a wheelchair ramp. On busy and congested routes, other vehicles will be prevented from parking in the stop area.

Regular inspections will ensure that bus stops remain to a high standard. The footway and carriageway surfaces in the vicinity of a bus stop will be assessed to ensure the correct kerb height is maintained; encroaching vegetation will be cut back; and all faults will be quickly remedied.

Passengers will always feel safe when walking or cycling to and from a bus stop, and waiting for and travelling on, a bus. Feeling safe whilst accessing and travelling on a bus must be ensured. Busy bus stops will be lit and/or covered by CCTV.

Potentially, the management and maintenance of bus stop infrastructure (i.e. stops, shelters, interchanges and stations) could be brought in-house. In so doing, we could improve and standardise the offer in terms of infrastructure and at-stop information. This would be paid for from income generated by advertising at key bus stops on high trafficked routes.

Objective 7: Bus information is widely available, in various formats, and accessible to all

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29
- Ensure software connectivity to Staffordshire's RTPI systems is accurate and reliable.
- Roll-out RTPI displays in line with the bus stop improvements under Objective 6. Stop identification will be informed by data, while also ensuring an even balance in the distribution of RTPI displays across the county.
- Information totems will continue to be installed in Type 1 town centres, including in Tamworth, Stafford, Lichfield, Cannock, Leek, Stone, Kidsgrove, Burntwood and Rugeley.
- Roll-out the service standard for bus stop information, commensurate with usage at each stop, with all stops having a minimum of a QR code.
- Deliver an online Staffordshire Journey Planner.

Enhanced Partnership Asks
- Support visual and audible onboard announcements, which are required on all buses by October 2026.
- Explore the options to centralise the responsibility for at-stop printed information, ensuring a consistent standard for publicity and branding across the county, making passengers feel confident in using buses.
- Run wide-ranging campaigns to raise awareness of the bus network as a relevant and appealing sustainable alternative to the car.
- Display each other's service details where routes complement each other.
- Agree set dates when timetable changes (other than emergency timetables, those services operated under contract e.g. education related services) and fare increases can be made. In so doing, liaison is also needed with neighbouring Enhanced Partnerships.
- Make more use of social media platforms to give passengers key messages such as bus disruptions and bus promotional campaigns, including a 'how to use a bus' video. The latter can explain how to use the local bus network and the economic, social and environmental benefits of bus travel.
- Renew and maintain systems that enable data to be shared to local and national Government, and travel information to be shared to the public.

Table 34: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Accurate and reliable RTPI software	• Live movements of every bus in the county (via 'intelligent' ticket machines) will provide the real time bus information at RTPI enabled bus stops. • Can also be used as part of a virtual bus priority scheme.	TBC
RTPI displays	• Passengers enjoy a seamless, connected experience with service updates, accurate bus location, time schedules, route, and destination. • Displays commercial content alongside useful travel information and therefore generate an income, which can be re-invested.	£0.8m
Information Totems	• Provides timetable information, service disruption and delay messages. • Can display public and point of sale information. Therefore, can generate an income. • Display and annunciate the travel information and service messages. • In-built hearing loop.	£0.12m
Standard Bus Stop Information	• Improves passenger travel experience by providing timetable information.	TBC
Staffordshire Journey Planner	• Personalised travel information and recommendations • Time saving and cost efficient. • Real-time updates • Accessible anywhere with a smartphone.	£0.04m

Long term Vision to 2050

Travel information will be easily accessed via bus operator and journey planning websites and apps; passengers will have information at their fingertips, including times, accessibility information, fares, live running, disruption, cancellations, and a 'read out loud' facility for people who need it.

Before boarding the bus, bus stops will show accurate information about the services stopping there. On popular routes, this will comprise RTPI countdown signs and live mapping and travel information, including any disruptions and how many seats are available. Stops will have a voice annunciator and digital hearing loop to aid those with hearing and sight impairments.

At less well used stops, solar-powered RTPI information displays will be present at a suitable height for all passengers, including wheelchair users. They will show live bus arrival times, digital timetables and route maps. Live bus arrival information will also be activated as an audio announcement at the push of a button.

Large trip attractors, such as town centres, business and retail parks, rail stations and tourist destinations, will have comprehensive digital wayfinding systems, providing a wide range of local information, including bus and rail information, and walking and cycling routes.

Objective 8: Buses are accessible, zero emission, with high-quality on-board environments

Proposals for 2025/26 – 28/29

- Secure funding to purchase electric buses on the busiest corridors that also run through Air Quality Management Areas. Priority routes are in Burton, Leek and Newcastle.
- Review our procurement arrangements for socially and economically necessary bus services to give price options to include the provision of lower emission buses and on-board passenger facilities.
- Explore opportunities that will look to award longer contracts to bus operators to give them a sufficient level of certainty to be able to invest in new, higher specification vehicles, and build a stronger customer base.

Text Box 11: Burton Zero Emission Buses

Around £1million is required through the BSIP to contribute towards the delivery of electric buses and complementary bus infrastructure being delivered through Staffordshire's Levelling Up Fund 2 award. A business case has been produced for the total package of measures, which forecasts the following benefits:

- There will be direct benefits to the AQMA and residents living within one of the most deprived LSOAs in England. Increased patronage, travel time savings and improved bus quality deliver a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.4. (£59,382 carbon benefits, £36,904 air quality benefits, £1,075,394 congestion reduction benefits). The carbon and environmental benefits deliver a BCR of 2.01 (5 tonnes Nitrous oxide benefits, 131kg PM benefits, 12,319 tonnes of carbon benefits.
- There will be 19,972 weekly passengers, experiencing pleasant and comfortable journeys; reduced journey times due to bus priority, saving passengers approximately 5 minutes/trip; increased walking and physical activity associated with bus use; reduced congestion for all road users and increased journey reliability as more people use the bus; zero tailpipe emissions improving local air quality and reduced carbon emissions; and new electric buses will provide significant maintenance and operational benefits to the operator.

Enhanced Partnership Asks

- Agree to a refresh of the Enhanced Partnership agreement to include a decarbonisation pathway to ensure Staffordshire's bus fleet is zero-emission by 2050 and measures are in place to adapt to extreme weather events.

Table 35: Appraisal of Likely Benefits and Cost

Proposal	Benefits	Indicative Cost (£)
Electric buses on the busiest bus corridors that also run through AQMAs in Burton, Leek and Newcastle-under-Lyme	• Reduces pollutants and zero CO2 emissions. • Reduces noise levels. • Greater performance efficiency, meaning lower operational expenditures. • Improves the on-board environment. • Lower maintenance expenses. • Town centre location on the intersection of several busy roads. • Helps operators deliver services in rural areas, especially smaller bus operators, who will find the transition more challenging. Rural bus services tend to cover longer distances, over hillier terrain, and are typically tendered so have lower passenger turnover.	£6m
Review procurement arrangements for socially and economically necessary bus services	• Greater emphasis placed on non-monetary aspects of the bus tendering process e.g. emissions, on-board passenger facilities, etc. • Demonstrates the council's commitment to wider objectives, other than cost.	TBC
Award longer bus contracts e.g. 4 years with an option to extend for a further 4 years	• Greater chance of the operator investing in innovation and higher specification vehicles. • Enables a service to build a customer base, thereby supporting modal shift and reduction in car ownership.	TBC

Long term Vision to 2050

Every bus will be electric, hydrogen or another form of zero carbon emitting energy sources; every depot will have the necessary charging infrastructure; all the necessary changes will have been made to road layouts to accommodate zero-emission buses, and energy providers will have implemented grid capacity upgrades.

We are looking with interest at the trials being conducted into alternative fuels. For example, Go-Ahead is experimenting with roof mounted solar panels, which help to charge the bus's battery, removing the load on the alternator. Also, Metrobus is trialling the operation of hydrogen buses, which is an attractive option in Staffordshire as we have ambitions to make the A50/A500 the country's first strategic hydrogen corridor (brand name fifty500).

To adapt to changes in the weather because of climate change, it is expected that buses will need white roofs; tinted windows; roof and engine insulation; ventilation; and cooling and heating systems.

Green infrastructure will also play a role in change adaptation; trees will provide shade during hot weather and raingardens will absorb stormwater runoffs after heavy downpours. Well-designed and planned green bus stops can transform the public realm, improving health inequalities and deprivation.

Addressing poor air quality in Staffordshire's Air Quality Management Areas[12] - in Newcastle, Cannock, Leek, Burton, and Kidsgrove – using low/zero emitting buses is vital. Support will be provided to help bus operators secure funding to purchase new lower emission buses or retrofit existing ones.

All buses used in the county will have a high-quality on-bus environment, which delivers an excellent passenger experience. Buses that are equipped with information screens, audio stop announcements, hearing loops, CCTV, Wi-Fi, and charging sockets, make bus travel more attractive and comfortable for passengers.

We want every bus driver to receive the best training possible, resulting in every passenger, especially the elderly and those with physical and learning disabilities, having the best experience possible. Bus operators adopting best practice in relation to driver training, such as the Government's REAL disability equality training programme[13] is a great start, followed by more specific training like the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism.

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[12] An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is declared for an area where the local air quality has not met – or is unlikely to meet - the Government's national objectives where there are relevant receptors. Once an AQMA has been declared, further work is undertaken to monitor air quality in this area and identify what actions can be implemented to improve the air quality.
[13] REAL training: bus and coach modules - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Section 6: Targets, Monitoring and Reporting

The BSIP has set out the challenges to growing bus passenger numbers in Staffordshire. These challenges have come about following years of underinvestment in bus services and infrastructure. Reversing this decline will take many years. Therefore, a set of long-term targets are proposed to establish a clear pathway to achieving the BSIP's vision. Each target includes:

- Baseline data that has been used for this BSIP.
- A medium-term target that we want to meet by 2028/29 (i.e. by the end of the next funding period).
- A long-term target that we want to meet by 2050, aligning to the LTP's timeframe and the deadline by when the transport sector needs to be de-carbonised.

As the County Council does not run buses, achieving the targets is dependent on the readiness of bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership, available funding, and the delivery of related schemes.

The targets are live and will be continually reviewed considering additional data and insight, new funding streams or legislation, operators' business plans, and advances in technology.

We will monitor the effectiveness of existing and newly introduced bus improvement measures, ensuring that we continue to deliver and remain on track to meeting the BSIP's vision and that the BSIP is contributing to the LTP. It is intended that progress made against the targets set out in Tables 36 to 39 will be published annually and accessed on the council's website.

In addition to the targets, we will monitor and evaluate our 'asks' of our partners, particularly the Enhanced Partnership. Whilst we recognise that our partners face their own challenges and are accountable to delivering their organisation's aims and objectives, in the case of bus operators, they have also agreed to contribute to the delivery of the BSIP. Specific key performance indicators for the Enhanced Partnership will be developed and are likely to include, but not limited to:

- Taking actions to increase patronage on existing routes.
- Improving recruitment, retention, and training of bus drivers.
- Ensuring realistic setting of timetables, ensuring no services run early or late.
- Promoting fare offers and further developing the Knot ticket.
- Collaborating with neighbouring Enhanced Partnerships, including Stoke-on-Trent.

- Creating a forum where bus passengers and operators can talk to each other and better understand each other's perspectives.
- Investing in high quality and zero emission buses.
- Committing to the collection and sharing of data to enhance network performance and customers' experiences.
- Maximising the use of marketing campaigns and social media to inform passengers of timetable changes.

Table 36: Passenger Journeys - Number of individual bus journeys

Current (2023/24) position	2029 Target	2050 Target
10.3m	12m	20.5m

Rationale
Staffordshire performs poorly when compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to the county with regards to the number of passenger journeys per head of population. It is ranked 13th out of 15, equating to 11.7 journeys per person in 2023. Setting a target to increase journey numbers to around 12m by 2029 is ambitious despite it being lower than pre-COVID levels. Doubling passenger journeys by 2050 is likely to be achievable and closer to the levels we were seeing from 2010 to 2016. This would equate to 20.2 journeys per person.

Methodology
Daily passenger boardings and service provision compared to a September 2023 reference month will be provided by Ticketer/Bus Open Data Service (BODS) (electronic ticketing machines) or direct from bus operators who do not have BODS compatible software. We are confident that both sources will produce robust figures to indicate overall trends. Passenger boardings will include physical ticket sales, as well as smart cards, QR tickets, and where the driver counts passengers, such as school runs.

Table 37: Passenger Satisfaction – Public satisfaction with local bus services (overall)

Current (2023) position	2029 Target	2050 Target
49%	*61%	*80%

Rationale
Compared to local authorities that have similar characteristics to Staffordshire, the county is behind on most of the 29 specific bus related questions in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Satisfaction Survey. The overall satisfaction score for local bus services in Staffordshire is 49%, placing the county 10th out of 15, compared to similar local authorities. The lowest score was 44% and the highest, 61%.

Methodology
NHT data includes responses from non-bus users, it is not, therefore, a true representation of bus users' views. From 2025, we will commission Transport Focus to conduct Bus Passenger Surveys on an annual basis. They will speak with at least 1,000 passengers in the county throughout the year. Two questions in Transport Focus's survey cover satisfaction - personal safety at the bus stop and personal security while on the bus. Unlike the NHT data, Transport Focus' data can be filtered by gender, journey purpose, day type, etc.

* Based on current high scoring local authorities. Data will be taken from Transport Focus' Passenger Survey.

Table 38: Bus Accessibility - Households within 400m of an hourly or better bus service or DRT service on weekdays (Type 1 settlements)

Current (2024/25) position	2029 Target	2050 Target
74%	79%	95%

Rationale
Access to an hourly bus service in the county has dropped only slightly over recent years; in 2017, 79% of households were within 400m of an hourly or better bus service and this figure is now at 74%. This is despite the number of households increasing by 8.62%. The highest figure in the county is in Lichfield where accessibility levels are 97%. Type 1 settlements include Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford, Burton, Lichfield, Tamworth, Cannock, Burntwood, Kidsgrove and Talke, Uttoxeter, Stone and Rugeley. Investments proposed through the BSIP to deliver new services or extend the route of existing services will mean this figure can increase to 79% countywide by 2029. We believe that this target is ambitious with the funds that we have available.

Methodology
A 400m walking distance to a bus stop is widely adopted and is in line with DfT work and wider public transport planning guidance, including being recommended by the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT). Household address points are used as these are simpler to measure than estimating the population that lives within 400m. The accessibility analysis was undertaken using a 400m buffer around bus stops with a 60 minute or better service within the Cadcorp GIS software. Information on bus service frequencies and stops is based on Traveline data. This target provides an objective measure of accessibility to public transport by bus in Staffordshire.

Table 39: Bus Journey Time Reliability – Percentage of buses that run up to 5 minutes late and 1 minute early

Current (2023-24) position	2029 Target	2050 Target
73%*	77%	95%

Rationale
Ignoring the 13% of bus services that fell into the worst category for lateness - because they coincided with significant roadworks and lengthy diversions – over two thirds of bus services ran on time, between 60% to 80% of the time. Staffordshire is ranked 10th out of 15 in terms of public satisfaction with buses arriving on time. We will work with operators to ensure services do not run early and realistic timetables are registered. BSIP proposals to expand virtual bus priority will contribute towards improvements in reliability. Our Levelling Up Fund project will also improve reliability on key corridors in Burton and Stafford. The 2029 target is based on excellent reliability for all services benefitting from investment.

Methodology

The Bus Open Data Service (BODS) is a portal through which timetables, routes, live locations, and fares data for buses can be accessed. The live bus location data, which updates every 10 seconds, can be used to assess journey time reliability by comparing actual locations to the fixed timetable. For most standard services, operators are expected to run services no more than one minute early and five minutes late at least 95% of the time.

Not all bus operators upload their data onto the BODS portal. We will work with the Enhanced Partnership to encourage all operators to do this as it will help give a better picture of how the network is running. We will also ensure that all main operators have the software to allow live location data to be shared.