Pre-planning public engagement update

Engagement summary

Earlier this year Worcestershire County Council undertook a six week pre-planning public engagement on its proposals for the redevelopment of Redditch Railway Station. The pre-planning public engagement provided an opportunity for residents, businesses and other stakeholders to find out more about this project and to provide feedback whilst the plans are at an early stage of development, and prior to the submission of an application for planning permission.

The designs presented for the public engagement were prepared in accordance with the relevant rail and other industry standards to support ambitions for a redeveloped ‘gateway’ station at this location. Much of the detailed design will be brought forward as the project progresses, these details are likely to be the subject of planning conditions set by the local planning authority and the details will need to be submitted to and discharged in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of construction works.

Worcestershire County Council used a variety of publicity materials, delivery methods and material formats to promote and encourage participation in the engagement including:

* An **information leaflet** distributed to over 1300 addresses in geographic proximity to the station. Further paper copies were handed out at the drop-in engagement sessions or were available to pick up from Redditch Library. An electronic copy of the leaflet was distributed direct to over 80 identified stakeholders outside the leaflet drop area. Kingfisher Shopping Centre management delivered an electronic copy of the leaflet to all its tenants.
* **Posters** promoting the pre-planning public engagement were displayed at Redditch Railway Station, Redditch Library, Kingfisher Centre and a local Sainsburys.
* A **social media** campaign, utilising Worcestershire County Council’s existing media channels promoted the engagement further. Up to 7 August 2023 the analytics show: Facebook: Impressions: 14490 Engagements: 361 Clicks: 234. Twitter/X Impressions: 12356 Engagements: 213 Clicks: 103.
* Two **press releases** were carried on local media channels including Redditch Standard and Advertiser. There were eight separate articles carried.
* The project **website** provided information on the proposal and hosted an online response form for feedback. The website had 2,225 views during the six week pre-planning public engagement period.
* Two **drop-in engagement sessions** at Kingfisher Shopping Centre attracted 212 attendees over the two days. The drop in engagement sessions offered an opportunity to discuss the proposals with officers from the County Council and other members of the project team.
* 421 respondents provided written feedback on the proposals, 418 of these, provided feedback using an online **response form** hosted at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/redditchstation](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/redditchstation). Feedback received by email (1 respondent), letter (1 respondent) and by phone (1 respondent) uploaded to the online form by the project team for analysis and reporting purposes.

We Asked, You Said, We Did

The online response form collected information across a number of themes:

* Feedback on the proposals presented for Redditch Railway Station.
* Current usage of Redditch Railway Station.
* How people travel to and from the station.
* Equality monitoring questions.

This summary relates to the feedback provided on the proposals presented for Redditch Railway Station redevelopment.

All feedback has been carefully considered by the project team. This summary provides an overview of questions posed (‘We Asked’); your responses (‘You Said’) and how these have influenced (and continue to influence) (‘We Did’) the designs and supporting surveys and assessments prior to the submission of an application for planning permission to Worcestershire County Council.

**We asked: To what extent do you support the proposals for Redditch Railway Station as outlined in the information provided?**

You Said: 68% of respondents strongly or moderately support the proposals; 20% of respondents moderately do not support or do not support at all and, the remaining 12% are neutral.

We Did: Worcestershire County Council is continuing to develop the proposals and station designs in advance of submitting an application for planning permission to the local planning authority later this year.

**We Asked: Worcestershire County Council listed a number of station facilities and asked respondents to score their importance (from most to least important).**

You Said: Over 70% or more of respondents advised that the following facilities at the station were moderately or very important:

* Real time passenger information for rail services
* Passenger toilets
* Passenger pick up and drop off in the car park
* Seated indoor waiting area
* Ease of interchange with bus service
* Staff presence at the station.

We Did: The County Council knows that these facilities matter, they will continue to be included within the proposals being progressed through detailed design.

**We Asked: Worcestershire County Council asked if there were any other station facilities the project should consider.**

You Said: Respondents identified the following facilities as important.

* Car parking

You Said:Respondents were supportive of retaining the car park at the station with some suggesting this should be free to encourage more people to use rail.

We Did: The car park is currently managed by West Midlands Trains as the station facility owner, there are no changes proposed to the management as a result of this scheme.

* Train services

You Said: Respondents made comments about rail services including about reliability, timetables and frequency.

We Did: The project is unable to directly influence rail services and timetables, your feedback has been shared with West Midlands Railway.

* Staffed ticket office

You Said: Respondents suggested the station should continue to include a staffed ticket office.

We Did: In July/August 2023 the rail industry undertook a public consultation on the future of ticket offices in stations. The outcome of the consultation is not yet known but it is anticipated that the designs for and provision of a ticket office at Redditch Railway Station will be determined by the national directive for rail operators arising from this consultation.

* Accessibility

You Said: Respondents were keen that the station be accessible to all users, there were some concerns about access if the new lift is out of order, access from the car park, the length of ramp system and safety on the pedestrian crossing.

We Did: Redditch Railway Station is being designed in line with Department for Transport guidelines on accessible railway stations to provide step free access to all areas. Furthermore, Network Rail’s ‘inclusive design’ guidance will be followed to help deliver ‘inclusive, accessible, convenient and welcoming station environments for everyone’. An assessment of the scheme is being undertaken throughout the design process to ensure the redeveloped station is accessible and inclusive for all.  
Amongst the facilities at the station the following will make it easier for those with accessibility requirements to use the station:

* Direct level access from the car park into the station building.
* Direct level access from the station building to an upgraded crossing over Unicorn Hill leading to the bus interchange, Kingfisher Centre and Redditch town centre.
* Ramp and lift access to all areas of the station.
* A dedicated passenger drop off/pick up within the station car park.
* A new pedestrian footway along the vehicle station access road.
* Real time information boards for bus and rail services.
* Improved wayfinding signage.
* Audio frequency induction loops for station announcements.
* Contrast/increase natural light/less clutter within the station building.

Building and design

You Said: Respondents mentioned the look of the station suggesting that the design should be in keeping with the environment, location and numbers of people who use the facility (i.e., moderate).

We Did: The adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan and Town Investment Plan support the redevelopment of the railway station to create a new landmark gateway to the town centre which will sit at the heart of Redditch Borough Council’s Railway Quarter ambitions. The design, scale, appearance and layout of the proposed station redevelopment will be designed to take account of the observations, guidance and comments received from all key stakeholders, including the comments received to the pre-planning public engagement.

**We asked: Worcestershire County Council asked respondents if they had any other comments on the proposals.**

You Said: Respondents provided feedback across a number of themes.

* Funding and cost

You Said: Respondents were concerned about cost of project and suggested that the funding should be spent on other council services such as roads, schools or the local hospital.

We Did: Worcestershire County Council is developing the plans for Redditch Railway Station working with Redditch Borough Council, Redditch Town Deal Board and the rail industry. The proposals for Redditch Railway Station have met the funding criteria and been approved for funding by the County Council’s Cabinet from budgets allocated for the purpose of rail investment in the County. The funding for this project has been allocated specifically for Redditch Railway Station Redevelopment (i.e., it cannot be spent on other projects or allocated to different departmental budgets).

* Destination Redditch

You Said: A number of respondents suggested that Redditch needed to do more to attract the visitor economy and become a destination in its own right.

We Did: The adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan and Town Investment Plan support the redevelopment of the railway station to create a new landmark gateway to the town centre which will sit at the heart of Redditch Borough Council’s Railway Quarter ambitions. Investment in Redditch Railway Quarter is essential for Redditch to compete effectively with nearby towns for economic activity and growth, and to attract more residents and visitors into Redditch town centre. Improved wayfinding will signpost people arriving by rail to town centre landmarks. It is anticipated that the station redevelopment will assist in unlocking opportunities for further investment and regeneration schemes in the town centre.

* Project scope

You Said: Respondents suggested the scope of the project be increased to include works to the immediate surrounding area including buildings adjacent to the station.

We Did: The project will not impact the deliverability of future works in the vicinity of the station. Redditch Railway Station Redevelopment includes the existing station building, car park, public open space and improvements to access for cycling and walking on Unicorn Hill. Works beyond this are outside the scope of the project.

* Access across Unicorn Hill

You Said: Respondents raised concerns about pedestrian safety on Unicorn Hill, suggesting the pedestrian underpass be retained instead of the proposed crossing.

We Did: The existing pedestrian underpass will be closed, and an upgraded pedestrian crossing installed over Unicorn Hill to provide access to the existing bus interchange, the Kingfisher Centre and Redditch town centre.

* Anti-social behaviour

You Said: Respondents were concerned about anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the station.

We Did: The project is actively consulting with British Transport Police, West Mercia Police, Redditch Borough Council and other rail industry stakeholders on the design development to ensure the project reduces the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour. Closing the pedestrian underpass is part of the mitigations recommended to reduce the opportunities for anti-social behaviour at this location alongside CCTV, lighting and passenger help points.

* Sustainability

You Said: Respondents were keen for the station design to include sustainable features such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging and rain water collection.

We Did: There are a number of ways in which the project is looking to reduce its carbon impact these include:

* The design will retain and refurbish existing structures on the site wherever possible, this reduces embodied carbon rather than building new structures.
* The project includes the installation of solar photo voltaic panels on the roof of the new station building.
* The project includes provision for cycle storage and integration with the sustainable transport network (walking and cycling) promoting uptake in active and sustainable modes of transport to access the station.
* The project will create a new landscaped public open space to improve biodiversity and resilience to extreme weather events.

Redditch Railway Station has been the subject of ecology surveys and assessments, undertaken to understand its ecological sensitivity. As part of the planning application Biodiversity Net Gain assessments will also be submitted.

* Car park

You Said: Respondents were concerned about the management of the existing car park particularly at peak times including the lack of a passenger pick up/drop off.

We Did: Your feedback about the current management of the car park has been shared with the station facility owner, West Midlands Trains. A pick up and drop off area for all vehicle users is proposed as part of the scheme.

* Vehicle access

You Said: A number of respondents raised concerns about the narrow vehicle access road off Unicorn Hill in particular as they exit the station car park.

We Did: The project is addressing this concern by its proposal to widen the access road to facilitate two-way traffic movements, along with a new footpath to provide a safe route for pedestrians accessing the station from this direction.

* Future station plans

You Said: Respondents suggested that plans for the station should include provision for an extra platform and track for future expansion.

We Did: The designs of the station do not preclude a second platform/track at this location in the future.

What Next?

Worcestershire County Council would like to thank everyone who has provided written feedback on the proposals for Redditch Railway Station.

Worcestershire County Council is preparing a planning application for submission to the local planning authority (Worcestershire County Council) later this year. Once the planning application has been submitted, the application paperwork including supporting surveys and plans will be available to view on the County’s planning pages at [Planning applications | Worcestershire County Council](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/planning-applications). A statutory consultation process will allow residents, businesses and other stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the detailed proposals which will be determined by the planning committee.

A Statement of Community Engagement will be submitted as part of the planning application, this will describe in more detail the public engagement process and the feedback received.

Future updates about Redditch Railway Station will be posted on this website.