

Appendix I: Connectivity and Congestion in Staffordshire

External Connectivity¹

Located near the centre of the country, Staffordshire has good transport links to towns and cities across the region and further afield as shown on Map I1. For example, the M6 and M42 provide north-south links, and the M54 provides a link to the west and to Wales. In the south of the county, running south-east to north-west, the M6 Toll Road bypasses the West Midlands conurbation. The A500, A50, and parts of the A5, A449 and A38 are all trunk roads that run through the county, providing direct access to many of the larger settlements in neighbouring authority areas.

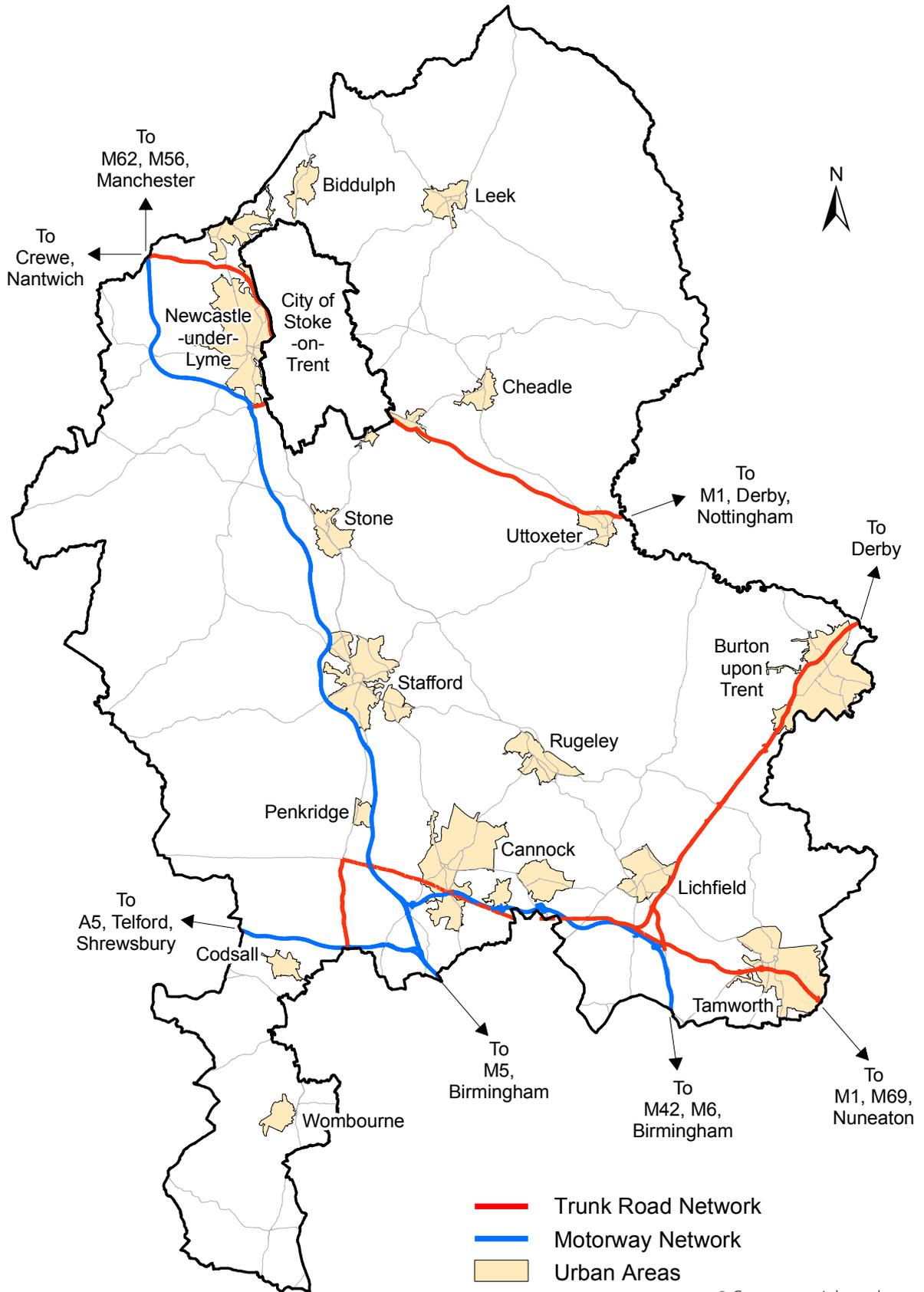
Away from motorways and trunk roads, Staffordshire's local roads also provide good external connectivity as shown on Map I2. The vast majority is single carriageway, with at-grade junctions and frontage access, with national speed limits.

In terms of rail connectivity, Staffordshire's location is again beneficial. The main route in the county is the West Coast Mainline (WCML), which runs north-south through the county with services to London Euston and Liverpool Lime Street. It provides fast connections with travel times from Stafford to London Euston of 1 hour 17 minutes and 52 minutes to Liverpool Lime Street. Other key rail services which call at Stafford Rail Station include the Cross Country service to Manchester and Birmingham which operates every half hour; the latter terminating at either Bristol Temple Meads or Bournemouth.

In terms of rail freight, the WCML is also one of the country's principal routes and has over 50 freight trains per day in each direction. Other freight routes include the Bushbury junction and Wolverhampton Crane Street junction through to the WCML at Stafford, and from Water Orton and Kingsbury junctions through Wilnecote, Tamworth to Burton upon Trent and beyond to the north-east. Whilst the county has no intermodal rail freight facility, it is served by facilities at Hams Hall (North Warwickshire), Birch Coppice (near Tamworth), and Hortonwood (Telford).

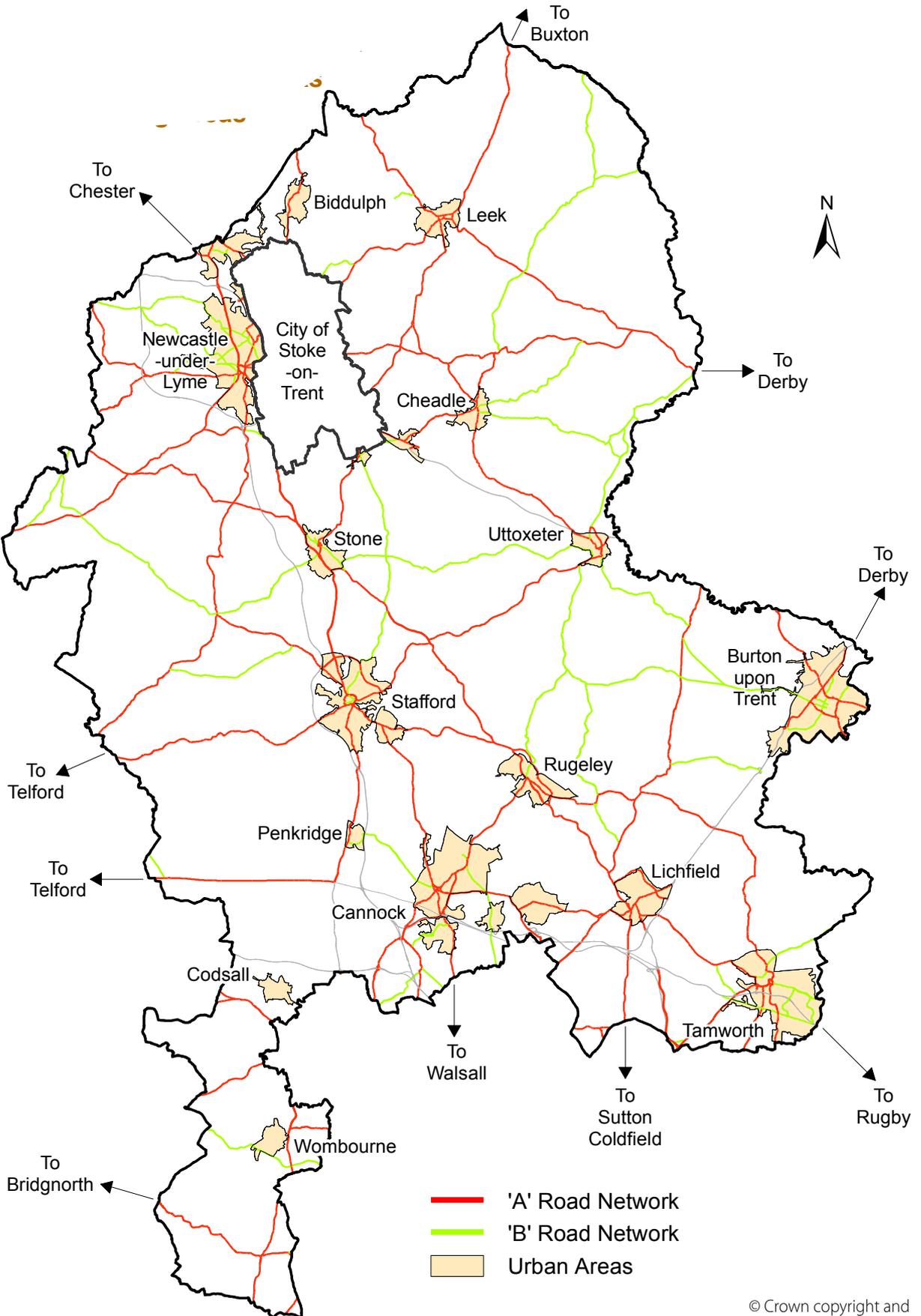
Work undertaken to inform the preparation of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (Phase 2 Revision) suggested there was a need for multi-modal Regional Logistic Sites, including new sites in Staffordshire to serve the Black Country and North Staffordshire. While some developer interest has been forthcoming regarding the former, the County Council has gone on record as objecting to the principle of such site provision.

Map I1: Staffordshire's Strategic Road Network and its Links to Surrounding Areas



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Map I2: Staffordshire's 'A' and 'B' Road Network and its Links to Towns in Surrounding Areas



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Connectivity by public transport (bus) to destinations outside of Staffordshire is good. Hourly or better services are available to all the main towns in surrounding area². However, due to the nature of bus services in the county these services tend to be slow. For example, Route 101 takes 80 minutes to get from Stafford to Hanley; the same journey would take approximately 40 minutes by car.

Staffordshire is served by scheduled long-distance coach services, provided on a fully commercial basis by National Express. They have pick up/drop off locations across Staffordshire and offer services to destinations throughout the UK and continental Europe.

Staffordshire has two small airfields - Tatenhill in East Staffordshire and Halfpenny Green in South Staffordshire - where activities are restricted to private business and recreational flying. The county is also within a 2-hour³ road journey of five major airports, namely Birmingham (50 minutes), Manchester (1 hour 5 minutes), East Midlands (1 hour 5 minutes), Liverpool John Lennon (1 hour 18 minutes), and Luton (2 hours).

Many major sea (passenger) ports, including Southampton, Harwich, Dover, and Liverpool, can be reached within a 4-hour⁴ drive from Staffordshire.

Internal Connectivity

Staffordshire's internal connectivity is good; it has the largest total length of road of any authority in the West Midlands and one of the largest within the country⁵. The county has 459km of motorways and trunk roads (including the M6 Toll Road), 5,749km of local road, 4,100km of on-road footway, 4,400km of Rights of Way Networks, 263km of cycle lane (excluding 89km of National Cycle Network and 185km of canal towpath), and 209km of canals. Internal connectivity has been improved in recent years with the construction of Burntwood, Biddulph, Rugeley, and Lichfield Southern Bypasses, and to some extent the M6 Toll Road.

Overall, connectivity by public transport (bus) to destinations within Staffordshire is reasonably good considering it is predominantly a rural county. The two main bus operators - Arriva and First Group - provide the vast majority (80%) of services on a commercial basis. Buses run from every 12 minutes on key routes in the main towns to 1 journey a week in sparsely populated areas of the county.

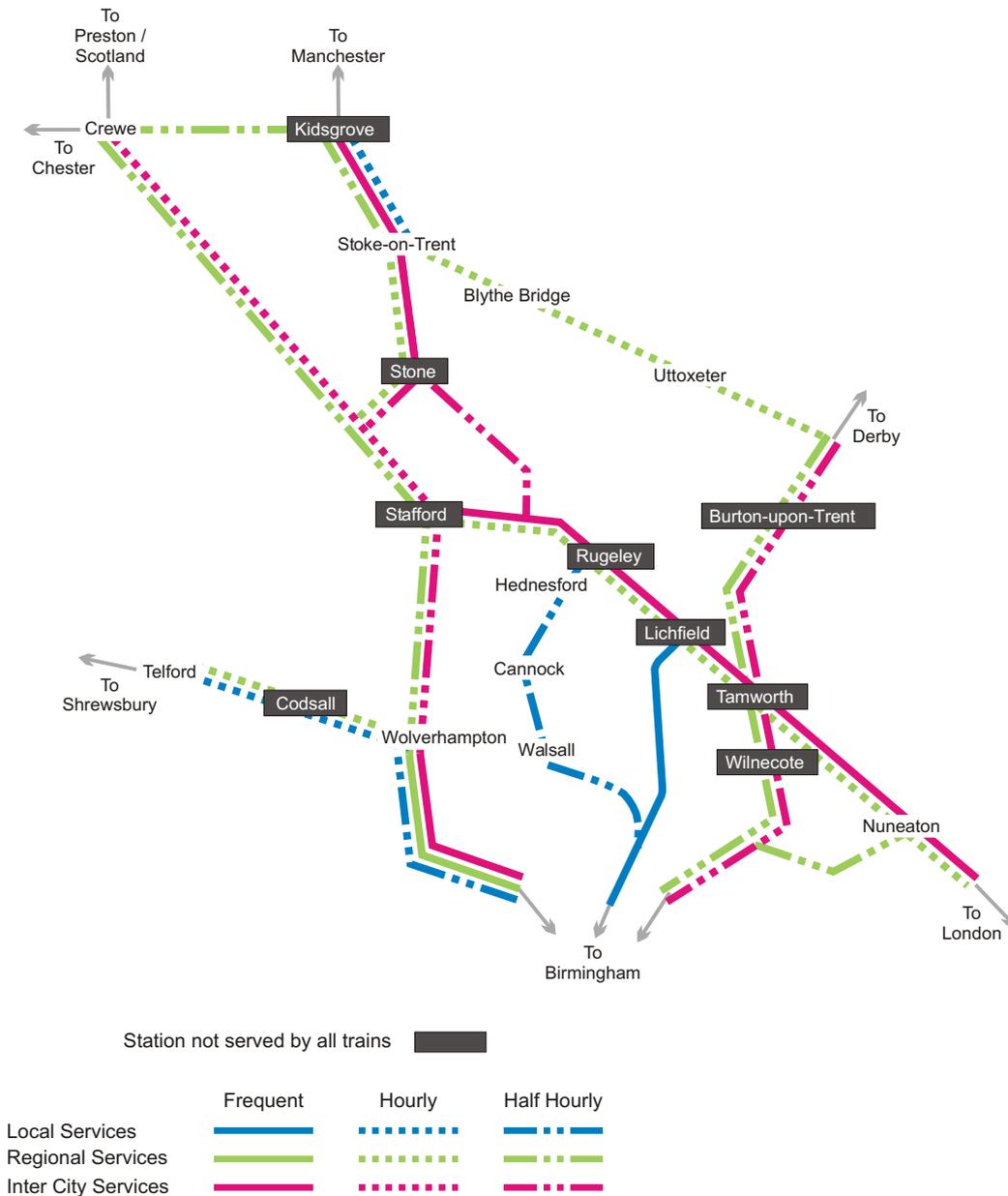
The county has few express inter-urban services providing fast and direct links between the county's main towns. For example, current services between Lichfield and Burton upon Trent take a considerable amount of time (58 minutes for a 13 mile direct journey) with deviations away from the main roads to serve villages and industrial estates.

Connectivity by public transport (rail) to destinations within Staffordshire is possible but generally involves at least one interchange; most rail journeys in the county are out of county rather than internal. Staffordshire has 220km of rail lines and 22 rail stations⁶. Many stations lie on branch lines with at least hourly services as shown on Map 13.

Staffordshire has a fairly extensive inland waterway system, primarily consisting of the canal network, totalling 209km. Canals provide both internal and external links, mainly for leisure purposes. Staffordshire has five major canals and they are the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, Trent and Mersey Canal, Shropshire Union Canal, Caldon Canal, and Coventry Canal⁷.

Information about the connectivity of Staffordshire's cycle network can be found in the Staffordshire Cycling Strategy (Appendix M). Similarly, information about the connectivity of Staffordshire's walking network can be found in the Staffordshire Walking Strategy (Appendix N) and the Staffordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Map I3: Staffordshire's Local Rail Network



1 Connectivity relates to the quality of the transport network in providing access between places that people want to travel to, measured by travel times and journey reliability. Good connectivity is vital to support current and future economic growth and can help to provide wider economic benefits to businesses.

2 Derby, Swadlincote, Stoke-on-Trent, the West Midlands Conurbation, Telford, Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Nuneaton, Crewe, and Macclesfield.

3 The starting point is Stafford and timings have been from the AA Route Planner (May 2010).

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5 www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/roadtraffic/roadlengths/
In 2008 Staffordshire had the 15th largest (out of 204 authorities) road network in the country.

6 Only 19 rail stations have rail services. Barlaston, Wedgwood and Norton Bridge have bus replacement services.

7 Staffordshire has a small number of disused canals some parts of which are safeguarded for future restoration by third parties. It is unlikely that any of these schemes will be significantly progressed during the period of this Plan.

8 www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/e-land/RightsOfWay/plan/