

1 Introduction

1.1 Report Purpose

This report has been prepared for TfGM and Wigan Council, and includes the preliminary transport and economic appraisal of options for the Wigan Transport Hub Scheme.

1.2 Project Overview

The improvements to Interchange at Wigan North Western and Wallgate stations formed a part of the Greater Manchester TIF Submission, although the proposals can be traced back into the 1990s. High-cost options have been considered which include the following:

- Merging the two stations into a single entity on the current North-Western station site; or
- Relocating Wallgate station east of its current location to enable the construction of a convenient new concourse and route between the two stations.

However, progression has been dealt past blows, including the failed Greater Manchester Congestion Charge vote in December 2008, and many of the issues are still relevant today.

There is a desire to provide high quality public transport in Wigan, which will offer a network which is:

- Simple to understand and connects key destination locations;
- Supplies a level of quality appropriate for a major region in the 21st century;
- Offers a level of service and quality attractive to car users as an alternative to travelling by car; and
- Provides a reliable, efficient, safe and attractive public transport service to the North West region and key Regional Centre (Manchester).

Wigan Transport Hub is designed to meet these objectives through being a key component of the public transport network in Greater Manchester for passengers in the North West region and those just outside of the region. It also seeks to offer seamless connectivity to the Regional Centre in terms of passenger environment and information.

Service frequency by rail is perceived as being a positive in the town and a key public transport gateway, with services from Wallgate to Manchester City Centre encouraging trips from a wide catchment area. Wallgate and North-Western being in close proximity in Wigan town centre is considered to represent an opportunity to create a comprehensive and integrated bus and rail interchange.

Aside from the positives existing there are also a number of issues aimed to be addressed by Wigan Transport Hub. The proposals are anticipated to generate cost-effective solutions to transport issues, which include:

- Safety/security concerns and problems for passengers travelling between Wigan North Western and Wallgate stations
- Inconvenience of travelling between the two stations
- Poor concourse area within Wigan North Western station
- Little integration of passenger information systems between the two stations
- Interchange facilities with buses requires significant improvement

- The overall public transport environment is poor and provides a lack of a sense of arrival in Wigan

Issues of through-traffic on Wallgate has historically been a problem, however there has recently been lottery funding to support the Wigan Wallgate Townscape Heritage Initiative. This is intended to transform the thoroughfare into a more pedestrian-friendly area, with improvements to townscape and the removal of unnecessary street-clutter, including signs and furniture. Work has already commenced on the improvements.

Extending to non-transport related issues; the scheme will also seek to address:

- The failure to provide high quality investment opportunities for town centre developments.
- Provision of a physical separation of Wigan Pier regeneration proposals from town centre facilities
- A desire to enable Wigan residents to fully enjoy the potential benefits of employment growth in the Regional Centre, thereby allowing Greater Manchester to realise its potential socio-economic and environmental benefits

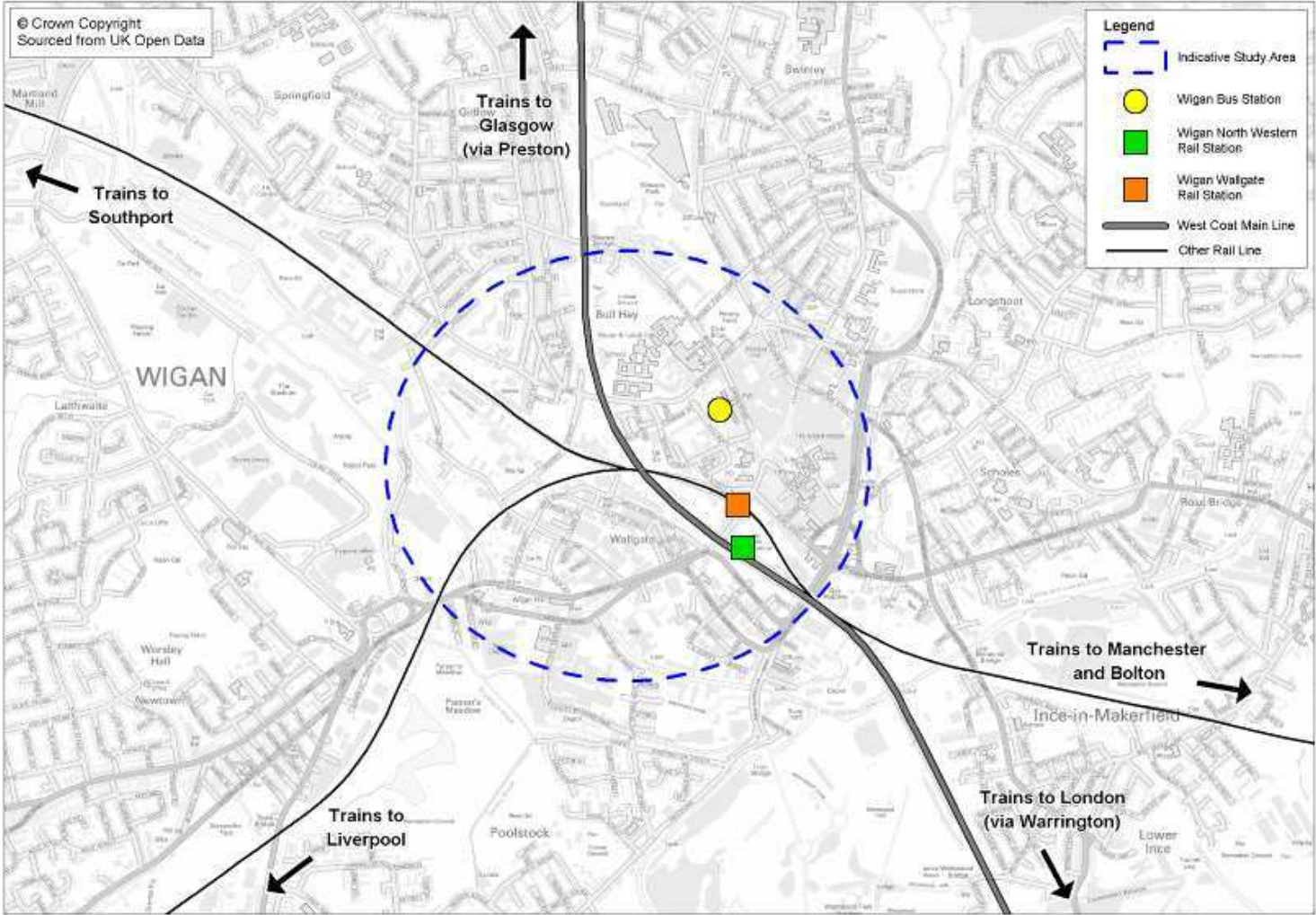
1.3 Study Scope

The objective of this study is to examine the transport options and benefits resulting from the improvement and integration of the two railway stations in Wigan Town Centre (Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate), together with possible integration with the bus station (or other improvements to bus/rail interchange), which will feed into the Transport Strategy for Wigan Council and the Wigan Central Area Action Plan.

The key output will be an outline business case for the recommended schemes, forming part of the development of the Wigan Transport Hub and based on the following:

- Policy fit;
- Value for money and affordability;
- Transport related benefits;
- Economic benefits;
- Deliverability - including risks to planning, implementation, and operation; and
- Indication of potential funding opportunities.

Figure 1.1: Study Area



A number of options ranging from supporting major infrastructure to low cost measures have been considered. The key aim of the project, therefore, is to sift through these and develop a rationale for making specific recommendations as to the inputs to the Wigan Transport Strategy. Sitting alongside this optioneering needs to be a high level Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) to prove the overall value of the scheme and an identification of specific show-stoppers that need further investigation if a scheme is to be progressed.

1.4 Data and Information Used in the Study

The following data and information has been used in the development and assessment of options for the Wigan Transport Hub:

- DfT's WebTAG and Network Rail's GRIP guidance
- Census 2001 Data (accessed via Neighbourhood Statistics)
- National Rail Travel Survey (supplied by the DfT on behalf of Wigan Council)
- National Rail Timetables
- Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) Patronage Data
- Wigan Congestion Study: HFAS Report 1639
- Wigan Transport Statistics 2010: HFAS Report 1664
- Wigan Core Strategy Transport Study: TfGM Highway Forecasting and Analytical Services Report 1672
- Wigan Draft Core Strategy Submission Version (September 2011)
- "Getting Business Back on Track" Wigan Council (December 2011)
- "Wigan Transport Hub – Overview and Progress to Date" (March 2012)
- Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study, Wigan Council (June 2007)
- Wigan Employment Land Review, Wigan Council (2007)
- Wigan Central Area Action Plan, Wigan Council (July 2010)
- TfGM Standards for Interchanges
- TFL "Interchange Best Practice Guidelines" (2009)

1.5 Report Structure

The Report includes the following Chapters:

- Executive Summary
- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Background Information
- Chapter 3 – Baseline Assumptions
- Chapter 4 – Development of Options
- Chapter 5 – Option Costs
- Chapter 6 – Appraisal of Options
- Chapter 7 – Economy and Regeneration
- Chapter 8 – Funding and Delivery