

A Case for Kenilworth Station

Summary

ASK – A Station for Kenilworth, is an organisation campaigning for a railway station in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. An active railway line runs through the town, which has seen a population growth of more than 40% since the old station closed in 1965. From campaigning events it is clear there is widespread public support for a new station. As of December 2006 the campaign has over 1000 supporters, with little opposition noted except for some neighbours to the preferred site, currently a builder's yard, though originally the goods yard of the old station.

The preferred site is in the centre of town, on the A452, which is the main road through Kenilworth. A significant proportion of the town is within a 15 minute walk of the site. All three local councils back the station and the site, which has now been safeguarded in the Local Plan. Kenilworth Station is a Local Transport Plan (LTP) target. Numerous other local plans call for increased use of "green" or "sustainable" public transport in the area.

There are five stations within an 8km distance of Kenilworth, only three of which are served by a bus service from town. Outside commuting hours on weekdays and Saturdays the service is limited or non-existent. All the stations have heavily used car parks that are usually filled to capacity (and often beyond) on weekdays. All road traffic between Warwick, Leamington, Kenilworth and Coventry is subject to significant traffic congestion, consistently highlighted in Quality of Life reports.

Although mainly single track now, all but a short stretch of the line between Leamington Spa and Coventry was once dual track. Apart from the cutting at Stoneleigh Road the track bed appears to remain wide enough to take dual track, with the notable exception of the bridge over the A46. Dual track has now been reinstated north of Stoneleigh Road, with signalling improvements over the remaining single track section. As an important part of the regional transport infrastructure any increase in capacity must make a service to Kenilworth realistic. The rail industry should not overlook the demand, the backing and the potential for growth.

Introduction

In July 2005 the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) said, "A case would need to be made for a new station [at Kenilworth] and additional route capacity. ... The SRA has not seen a business case and is therefore unable to support the development of Kenilworth Station." (West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy)

In April 2006 Warwickshire County Council produced an outline business case for the station which is now being considered by the Department for Transport (DfT). The DfT included Kenilworth Station as a Third Party Promoted Scheme in the New Cross Country franchise, and therefore "...subject to feasibility and funding, [it could] be delivered during the life of the new franchise".

This document is not a business case. It is a layman's appraisal of the evidence in favour of a station in Kenilworth. It has been drawn up by campaigning group, **ASK – A Station for Kenilworth**, a group of people keen to see opinions in favour of the station are given their due weight in the planning process.

ASK is backed by **Action 21**, a group acting to improve the quality of life in Warwick District while safeguarding resources and the environment for future generations.

www.action21.co.uk

Kenilworth in Context

Kenilworth lies in a key transport corridor between Warwick/Leamington and Coventry. The road network is heavily used and traffic congestion is a significant problem. Warwickshire's Quality of Life report 2004 says that during the 1990s, "... road traffic was growing at around 2% per year in Warwickshire". In Warwick District in particular, traffic congestion is considered as an, "area for concern".

When the old station closed in January 1965 the population of Kenilworth was around 16,000. At the census in 2001 the population was 23,219, with much of the eastern side of town having been developed over the intervening period. The railway line now runs through the centre of town, an unseen obstacle hidden largely by cuttings.

70% of the population are employed and 70% of them drive to work by car, with an additional 5% travelling as passengers. Campaigning experience shows a reluctance to consider the available alternatives. Buses are often rejected because they are subject to the same traffic congestion as cars, and cycling is often rejected because it is seen as being dangerous on busy roads. The option of rail is usually greeted with enthusiasm, particularly by those who are surprised to discover that a line runs through their home town that they have no access to.

The rail industry has gone through a significant period of change since the late nineties and it has taken time to reach the current levels of growth and reliability. The 2000 LTP optimistically stated that Kenilworth Station could be operational by 2002. The commitment has been carried forward to the 2005 LTP and a rail service for Kenilworth by 2010 seems much more realistic.

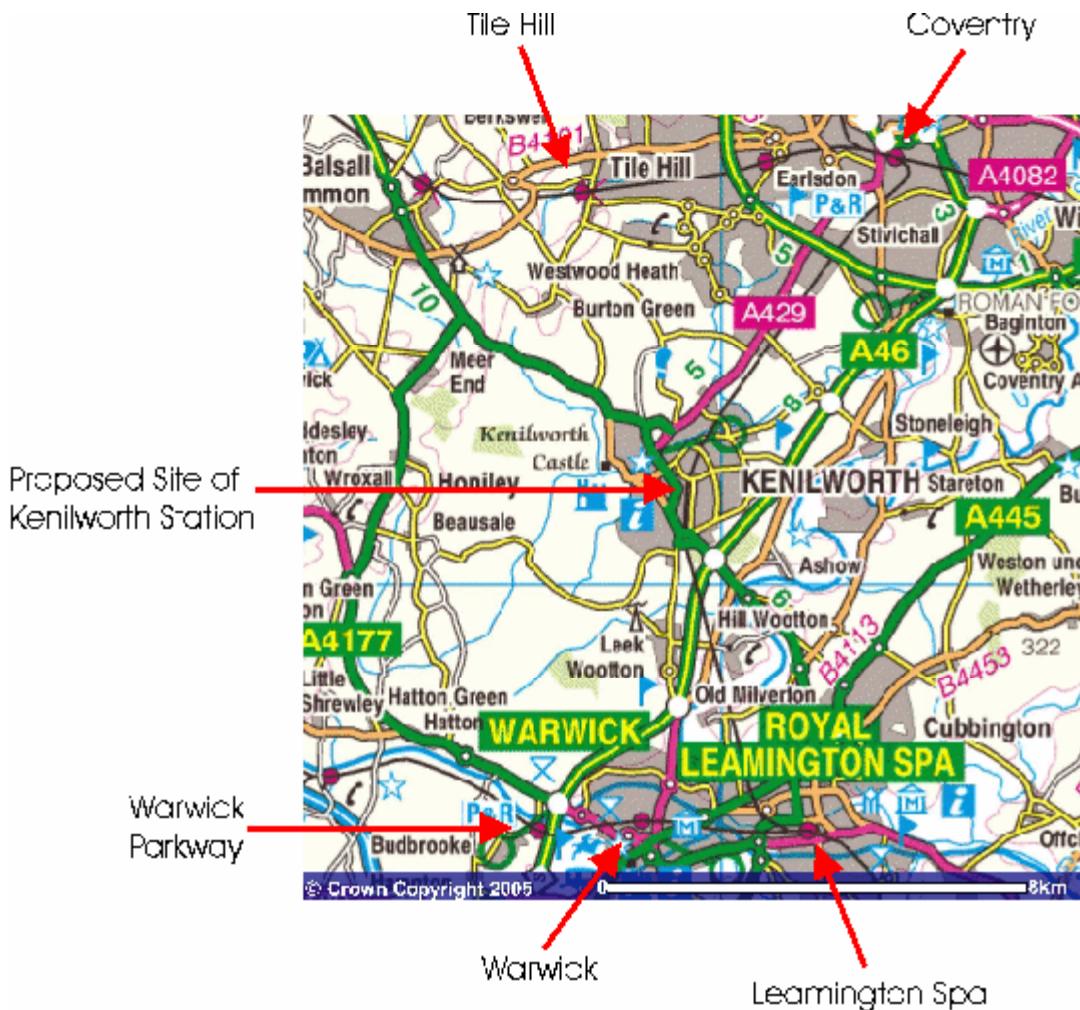


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Current Access to the Railway

At the moment, if Kenilworth citizens wish to use the railway there are five realistic options within 8km of town.

Tile Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service from Kenilworth: None • Parking: 129 Free, usually full weekdays
Coventry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service from Kenilworth: X17 – Best journey time by timetable: 18 minutes, plus walk of <5 minutes • Parking: 572 £5/day, usually space available
Warwick Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service from Kenilworth: None • Parking: 450 £4.50/day <9am, £2/day >9am, usually full weekdays, currently overflowing onto an area with temporary planning permission
Warwick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service from Kenilworth: X17 – Best journey time by timetable: 33 minutes, plus walk of <5 minutes • Alternative Bus: 539 – Best journey time by timetable: 16 minutes, plus walk of <5 minutes • Parking: 40 £2.50/day, usually full weekdays
Leamington Spa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service from Kenilworth: X17 – Best journey time by timetable: 19 minutes, plus walk of <10 minutes • Parking: 177 £3.50/day, usually full weekdays, overflowing midweek

Notes X17 – Three buses/hour weekdays & Saturdays between 7am and 7pm – No Sunday service
539 – Eight buses/day weekdays & Saturdays between 7am and 7pm – No Sunday service

The following should be noted:

- Two stations have no bus service from Kenilworth
- From personal experience buses rarely run to their timetable in *normal* peak time traffic
- Only one station can be relied on to have car park spaces available on weekdays
- Whichever station people choose to use they are having to travel out of a town that the railway runs through to catch a train elsewhere
- By choosing to use the railway people are unavoidably contributing to local traffic congestion however they travel to their chosen station
- A rail journey between Leamington Spa and Coventry is 12 minutes (by timetable) – A road user at peak times would need to allow at least 40 minutes

The Preferred Site

A number of different sites have been suggested for Kenilworth station. However, Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council and Kenilworth Town Council all agree on their preferred site which is in the centre of town, off the A452, the main route through town. The site is currently a builder's yard and was once the goods yard of the old station.

Warwick District Local Plan states the land, "... is allocated for the development of a railway station... Other development will not be permitted ... if it would be likely to prejudice the implementation of the scheme." It continues, "This site has been identified as it represents the most attractive location for rail users, travelling both to and from the town. It is centrally located, close to the town centre and has good accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists."

Outline plans for the site require only the builder's yard and railway land. Provision is made for car and cycle parking, a bus interchange and a taxi rank. In addition, given its central location a large proportion of the town is less than 15 minutes walk away. All the alternatives are either away from the main road or away from the centre of town.

Whilst some supporters live adjacent to the railway it must be acknowledged that a small minority of those living near the preferred site are opposed to the station. Arguments range from lack of need to problems of over-popularity, specifically in relation to car parking on neighbouring streets. Other objections include fear of accidents, exhaust pollution from trains stopping, standing and re-starting, noise pollution from an increased number of trains, structural damage, loss of garden land, and devaluation of property.

Whilst not wishing to minimise the value of any individual's right to object to the station it should be noted that:

- lack of need and over-popularity are mutually exclusive arguments
- there is provision for car parking at the station and the council would wish to discuss fears of street parking through overflow or charge avoidance with neighbours
- modern trains are much more fuel efficient than older ones, and very much more fuel efficient than a badly maintained car with a single occupant sitting in a traffic jam
- current plans require no land other than railway property and the builder's yard
- the Nation Association of Estate Agents say, "...house prices would tend to go up when a station is created as it aids communication and is a good selling point"

Obstacles

Single-Track

ASK acknowledge that the line between Leamington Spa and Coventry has limited capacity. However the new Cross Country franchise routes more trains through town and terminates more of them at Birmingham New Street. The shorter routes and different class of rolling stock create an opportunity for them to stop here.

Kenilworth Alone?

ASK do not see Kenilworth Station in isolation but as a part of the development of the regional network. Recent re-dualling and signalling work provide an opportunity to extend the current Coventry – Nuneaton service down to Leamington Spa, together with additional stops, e.g. at the Ricoh Stadium in Coventry.

Rail Passenger Partnership Fund

ASK urge the government to reconsider the suspension of the RPP Fund that is intended to kick-start projects, like Kenilworth Station, that contribute to the Government's objectives of promoting transport integration and encouraging a switch from road to rail.

Conclusion

ASK believe the railway line between Coventry and Leamington Spa has unrealised potential and is an important part of the regional transport network. The government, the councils and many other organisations are calling for increased use of public transport because the present growth of road traffic is unsustainable. Where possible the public are clearly responding as, after a lot of hard work, the rail industry is seeing unsurpassed levels of growth and efficiency.

The urgency and demand exist - After 40 years isn't it time for trains to call again at Kenilworth?



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