

**SERVICE PLAN CONSULTATION**  
**15<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2008 – 7<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2009**  
**SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION COMMENTS/RESPONSES**

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
<b>General</b>	14	Respondents questioned how much the changes would cost and where the funding would come from. The expenditure seemed high for relatively little advantage.	<p>The primary driver for the proposed changes is improved response times and re-building some of our fire stations would provide improved facilities for our firefighters and the public. Funding would come from the sale of some existing sites and from within the capital budget.</p> <p>Judgements about expenditure on new stations need to take account of the significant investment the Service will be required to make if it maintains some of the stations proposed for closure.</p>
	3	Respondent felt that it was difficult to oppose a plan to improve services for people who currently experience an inferior standard of service provision.	The Authority welcomes the acknowledgement that the proposals were based on improving the standard of emergency response provision.

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	3	Respondents asked if the Service was only maintaining the numbers of fire engines on station for the present time just to get these proposals passed. Will the numbers of fire engines reduce?	The service plan made it clear which stations were included and that at this stage there was no intention to reduce the number of fire engines. The Integrated Risk Management planning process will always consider the level of resourcing to meet demands.
	9	Respondents wanted more information about station locations to help fully comment on the plan.	Once any specific sites have been identified these will be subject to local public consultation via the planning process.
	1	Respondent queried why only the last 3 years worth of data has been used, surely data from a longer period would be more accurate.	<p>Three years worth of data showing little significant change in trends is considered sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions.</p> <p>Due to the significant changes in call levels over the previous 10-15 years, using data from more years would have produced a less rather than a more accurate picture.</p>
	2	Respondents asked if the Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS) Global Positioning Technology is launched will station sites become less of an issue, so why move them?	Whilst AVLS has been introduced as a method of locating fire engines en route, there is still a high proportion of time when engines are physically based at a station.

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	1	How can you justify constantly eroding fire cover in the name of efficiency and rationalisation?	<p>The Authority does not believe it is eroding fire cover, rather it is locating some of its resources in a better place to provide improved emergency response times.</p> <p>The Authority is proposing to improve fire cover.</p>
	5	Respondents queried the cost of the proposals; felt they were just a cost cutting exercise and wanted to know if tax payers would receive a reduction in council tax as a result of reduction in services.	<p>The proposals are not about cutting costs, rather they are about trying to improve response times and in some cases providing better facilities for our firefighters and the public.</p> <p>There would be no reduction in services, with the same number of fire engines operating from improved locations.</p>

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	6	Respondents were against the overall proposals within the plan without giving any specific reasons. One queried the increase in the carbon footprint and whether any thought had been given to that.	<p>The Service's carbon footprint will be measured over time with the overall aim of achieving reductions in premise and vehicle movement footprints.</p> <p>New buildings will reduce the Service's carbon footprint as demonstrated by the new Headquarters building, as old buildings are not as environmentally friendly as newly built premises. A better distribution of fire stations will reduce the distances travelled by fire engines responding to emergencies, further reducing the Service's carbon footprint.</p>
	8	Respondents raised queries in respect of the data and analysis.	The Authority is satisfied about the way it has used the data to reach conclusions aimed at reducing risk in the community.
<b>Aston</b>	2	Respondents referred to the former location of Central Fire Station and wondered if the reason for replacing Aston was profit.	The proposal is not related to disposing of the site for profit reasons. Aston station was built in 1924. It is in a residential area of compact roads. Its facilities are dated and our data indicates that better response times would be achieved if it was relocated still in Aston but nearer to the inner ring road.

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	1	Respondent welcomed the building of a modern station.	The Authority welcomes the support for building a modern station.
<b>Bickenhill</b>	8	Respondents supported the fire station to be kept open with one asking if it will retain a firefighting capability to cover risks such as the NEC airport and motorway.	A small number of concerns regarding the relocation of the fire engine into the Chelmsley Wood area. However, the Authority believes the risk is much higher in the proposed area for the new station and those higher risk areas will receive improved attendance times. Therefore, the Authority intends to proceed with the proposal to relocate the fire engine from Bickenhill to a new location at Chelmsley Wood.
		A public meeting about the proposal was attended by approximately 5 people. Concerns included response times to some areas, safe systems of work, hotel sleeping risk, increased number of dwellings, airport expansion.	“
	1	Respondent supported the proposal to build a new station at Chelmsley Wood suggesting it would bring much needed employment to the North Solihull regeneration area.	The Authority welcomes the support for the proposal.

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<b>Bilston</b>			<p>No specific comments were received regarding the proposal to place a 12 hour fire engine at this station. However, the resourcing of the move was dependent on changes at other fire stations. Because those changes are not being implemented the Authority has decided not to proceed with this proposal.</p>
<b>Billesley</b>	131	Signature petition opposing the closure of Billesley Fire Station.	<p>These proposals did not involve a reduction in services to the Billesley and adjacent area.</p> <p>There has been significant opposition to relocating the fire engine from this location and combining it with one of the fire engines from Hay Mills at a new location in Hall Green. Responses have included the good positioning of the station, the diverse community served and the cover it provides to Solihull. Reference was also made to the high levels of engagement with the community including the highly successful open days. Taken together with the comments in respect of Hay Mills fire station the Authority has decided not to proceed with this proposal at this time.</p>

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	27	Pre-printed slips bearing the logo opposed to cuts at Billesley Fire Station.	“
	10	Respondents supported the Fire Station to be kept open as it is well positioned and serves a large, diverse population including Solihull.	“
	11	Pre-printed slips bearing the logo “opposing cuts to our Fire Service”.	“
	2	Respondents suggested making improvements to the existing station rather than moving it.	“
	2	Respondents felt the existing station was ideally located in the heart of the community. They supported the excellent ‘open days’ and community safety work undertaken by firefighters at the location.	“

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	60	A listening panel held in the Billesley area and attended by approximately 60 people highlighted considerable concerns regarding the closure of Billesley fire station and its replacement by a new fire station in the Hall Green area.	“
<b>Binley</b>	2	Respondents felt the withdrawal of night time cover would put people's lives at risk.	The proposals to redistribute fire engines in the Coventry area have been withdrawn whilst we consider the impact of station movements in the Solihull area. We may return with proposals at a later date.
<b>Brierley Hill</b>	1	Respondent welcomed the proposal to return to two 24 hour appliances.	The proposal was related to providing additional resilience into the wider area also including the new station to replace Cradley Heath and Halesowen fire stations with 1 x 24 hour fire engine and 1 x 12 hour fire engine. Because the Authority now intends to position 2 x 24 hour fire engines at the new combined location, the Authority has decided to leave the current arrangements at Brierley Hill as they are, with 1 x 24 hour fire engine and 1 x 12 hour fire engine.



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<b>Canley</b>	1	Why have the Fire Service recently spent money refurbishing Canley station if it is to be moved?	There has been some limited expenditure at the station (approximately £15k) to modernise the former sleeping and social areas to provide better facilities for personnel. Even if agreed it could be some years before a new fire station and facilities would be available. Existing personnel will benefit from the enhancements at the current site.
	1	Respondent welcomed the building of a modern station.	The Authority welcomes the support for a modern station.
	1	Respondent supported the fire station to remain where it was as it provides cover to University Hospital in Warwick which has the Air Ambulance.	Canley would continue to provide cover to the hospital from its new site.
	1	Respondent at the Bickenhill public meeting wondered why there was a proposal to build a new station as Canley Fire Station was on a main road.	There is an active regeneration scheme led by Coventry City Council in respect of the Canley area and if an opportunity arose the Authority would be minded to relocate Canley fire station if a suitable location in the Canley area could be found.

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<b>Coventry</b>	1	Respondent welcomed the return of two 24 hour fire engines.	The proposals to redistribute fire engines in the Coventry area have been withdrawn whilst we consider the impact of station movements in the Solihull area. We may return with proposals at a later date.
<b>Cradley Heath</b>		There has been considerable opposition expressed through the Elected Members on Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council regarding this particular proposal including a report on the matter submitted to the Authority's Executive Committee.	<p>Cradley Heath fire station was built in 1942. It is a cramped old fashioned building with no training facilities and it has been the intention to replace the station for some years.</p> <p>There will be significant costs if the Authority attempts to maintain the station on the present site.</p> <p>The Authority believes that the risks in the areas covered by the existing Cradley Heath and Halesowen fire stations will be better served by having a combined new fire station located between the two existing sites. Having listened to the concerns expressed in consultation the authority is minded to adopt a revised proposal in respect of the fire engines and have 2 x 24 hour fire engines instead of 1 x 24 hour and 1 x 12 hour.</p>

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	4	Concerns were expressed regarding the potential for the increased risk to firefighters and the general public.	<p>The proposals will reduce risks to the public because a better located fire station will provide an improved response in the Halesowen and South Sandwell areas.</p> <p>The risk to firefighters will not be increased. In fact by combining the staff from the two stations the Authority is likely to get a more integrated approach to training and improved safety.</p>
	287	Blackheath leaflet supporting the campaign to retain Cradley Heath Fire Station.	The Authority is not removing fire cover in the area, it is proposing to improve it.
	280	Pre-printed slips opposed to the cuts at Cradley Heath Fire Station.	The proposal does not involve cuts. The fire station will be relocated providing more effective cover of risks and an improved Service.
	7	Respondents supported the fire station to be kept open as it served the community well.	The new fire station will provide improved emergency cover and will maintain the Service's high quality support for all the communities in the area.

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	7	Pre printed letters were received opposing the closure of Cradley Heath and Halesowen and requesting the modernisation of both fire stations instead.	<p>The Service is not removing its fire cover from the Halesowen/Cradley Heath areas. It is improving the service it provides in both areas by moving its fire engines to a better location.</p> <p>Modernising the two existing fire stations would involve significant expenditure and achieve little improvement in services to the public.</p>
	39	Signature petition to retain Cradley Heath Fire Station.	“
	294	Signature petition to retain Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations.	“
	247	Signature petition to retain Cradley Heath Fire Station.	“
<b>Halesowen</b>	19	Respondents supported the fire station to be kept open as it is located conveniently next to the motorway and can provide support to Halesowen, Hagley, Cradley and Oldbury. Moving it would leave Halesowen more vulnerable.	The location of Halesowen fire station is not ideal. Moving Halesowen fire station will improve the coverage of risks in the Halesowen and adjacent areas. We will continue to have a good response to incidents on the motorway.

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	36	Halesowen and Rowley Regis leaflet supporting the retention of Halesowen Fire Station.	“
	1	Respondent suggested selling part of the land at Halesowen to realise the capital asset and building a new station on the same site.	“
	40	A public meeting held in the Halesowen area regarding the proposals to amalgamate Cradley Heath and Halesowen fire station was attended by approximately 40 people who were opposed to the amalgamation of the two stations. Concerns included the relative newness of Halesowen Fire Station, risks in an expanding area, traffic density and response times into Halesowen.	The proposals will result in an improvement in responses to incidents in the Halesowen and adjacent areas. The Service would also be better located to cover future increased risks in the area and to deal with increased traffic density.
	294	Signature petition to retain Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations.	The Service is not removing its fire cover from the Halesowen/Cradley Heath areas. It is improving the services it provides in both areas by moving its fire engines to a better location.

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	247	Signature petition to retain Halesowen Fire Station.	“
	2468	Signature petition to retain Halesowen Fire Station.	“
	318	Electronic survey completed by respondents opposing the closure of Halesowen Fire Station.	“
	999	Pre-printed slips bearing the logo opposed to the cuts at Halesowen Fire Station.	“
<b>Hay Mills</b>	6	Hay Mills is a fairly modern station. Why move it?	The Authority has listened to a number of concerns regarding the existing location of the station, its relative newness and the risk areas within it. It has also been mindful of the comments regarding general fire cover in the area. In addition to the above, because the proposal was related to the relocation of Billesley fire station at a new location in Hall Green, the Authority has decided not to proceed with the proposals in respect of this station at this stage.

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	1496	Signature petition objecting to proposals to close either Hay Mills or Sheldon Fire Stations.	“
	5	Respondents supported the station to be kept open as it is ideally located serves the Tysley Business Network and provides cover for the local businesses and the A45.	“
<b>Highgate</b>	1	Respondent opposed to reduction in fire cover.	The proposal was to move a 24 hour fire engine from Highgate to Kings Norton. This move was linked to the movement of Billesley fire station to Hall Green. This change is now not being made and therefore the appliance will remain at Highgate.
<b>Kings Norton</b>			No specific consultation replies were received in respect of the proposal to add a 24 hour fire engine to the station. However, this was linked with the proposal in respect of Billesley fire station. With this proposal not proceeding it has been decided to leave the station as it is with 1 x 24 hour fire engine.

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<b>Ladywood</b>	7	Respondents referred to the reduction of one appliance at the station citing the multitude of risks, the response to the Birmingham City Centre, safe systems of work problems and delays, workload at the station and the fact that, in the proposals, Highgate were also losing a fire engine.	The Authority is mindful of the considerable overall workload in the area covered by the station and therefore decided not to proceed with the proposal at this stage.
<b>Sheldon</b>	3	Respondent supported the fire station to remain where it is as it has served the community well, is ideally located and has excellent community facilities. Considerable opposition has been expressed by elected representatives in respect of the proposal to close this station and to move its fire engines to a new location.	There has been considerable opposition to closing Sheldon fire station and moving its fire engines to Shard End and Chelmsley Wood. As it has been decided not to proceed with those proposals the Authority has decided to retain Sheldon fire station with one 24 hour fire engine but to move the second 24 hour fire engine to the proposed new fire station at Chelmsley Wood. This is to address risk coverage and improve attendance times in the Chelmsley Wood and adjacent areas.
	1	Respondent referred to Sheldon as a predominantly residential area, suggesting lives would be put at risk due to a deterioration in fire cover.	“



Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	1496	Signature petition objecting to proposal to close either Sheldon or Hay Mills Fire Stations.	“
<b>Smethwick</b>	7	Considerable opposition was expressed by the elected representatives of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council about their concerns in respect of the proposal regarding Smethwick Fire Station. This, along with the other comments detailed in this consultation response which express a desire to retain the station because of the nature of the area and the diverse range of risks that it serves were raised at a public consultation meeting attended by approximately 60 people.	<p>There has been considerable opposition to closing Smethwick station. Arguments include the risks in the area; its work in the community; its close location to the community and the relatively young age of the station.</p> <p>Whilst the Authority is satisfied that surrounding fire stations can provide adequate cover in terms of emergency response times, it has decided to review its proposal and retain the station with 1 x 24 hour fire engine, moving the other 12 hour fire engine at the station to Tipton fire station.</p>
	3869	Signature petition to retain Smethwick Fire Station.	“
	287	Blackheath leaflet supporting the campaign to retain Smethwick Fire Station.	“
	12	Pre-printed return slips bearing the logo ‘Opposing cuts to our Fire Service’.	“

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	42	Respondents supported the fire station to be kept open as it has served a high risk community well and is ideally located.	“
	1	Smethwick Fire Station is a modern building, why close it?	“
	5	How can the aim of ‘Improving the response times from our fire engines travelling to incidents’ be met if Smethwick Fire Station is further away.	“
	2	How can you justify the closure of Smethwick station with the proposal to build a new super hospital in the area.	“
	2	With increased traffic flow on our roads surely response times into Smethwick will take longer.	“
	16	Pre-printed FBU slips bearing the logo, opposed to the cuts at Smethwick Fire Station.	“
	195	Smethwick ward newsletter supporting the campaign to keep Smethwick Fire Station.	“

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	2	Closing Smethwick station will increase the immediate risk to the local area and place extra demand on the surrounding stations.	“
	2	Smethwick is densely populated with large amounts of multi occupation, elderly residents and industrial buildings. Surely this is justification to keep it open.	“
<b>Tipton</b>			No specific consultation replies have been received in respect of the proposal to add an additional 12 hour pump to the station. The Authority believes this will help achieve better attendance there and it proposes to move the 12 hour fire engine from Smethwick to Tipton.
<b>Walsall</b>	2	One respondent expressed concerns about the intention to make the second fire engine at Walsall a 12 hour only fire engine and the general fire cover in the Walsall and surrounding area. Another referred to how busy the second appliance was at this station.	The Authority has considered the general coverage in the Walsall area and because Smethwick fire station will remain open, Walsall's 2 <sup>nd</sup> 24 hour fire engine will remain at Walsall fire station rather than being moved to West Bromwich fire station.

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<b>Ward End</b>	5	Respondent support the fire station to remain where it is as it is a modern building with excellent community facilities sited in an area with a need of an active presence.	Due to the decision not to move Hay Mills fire station to a new location in Hall Green and the decision not to build a new fire station in the Shard End area Ward End fire station will remain at its present location.
	2	The new station sites will leave a provision gap along Birmingham's boundary between Stratford Road and Shard End.	“
	266	Signature petition opposing the closure of Ward End Fire Station.	“
	3	Respondents expressed concern about the loss of the asset, given the high risk nature of the properties in the Ward End area and ideal route to Birmingham City Centre.	“
<b>Wednesbury</b>	1	The Elected Members of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council expressed considerable reservations about the relocation of this station albeit within the Wednesbury area.	The present station is ill equipped and in need of modernising. The Authority's risk analysis shows that the station would be better positioned at Wood Green. The Authority is minded to continue with this proposal and to relocate the station in the Sandwell area at Wood Green.

Subject Area	Quantity of Comments	Summary of Comments	Proposed Authority Response
	2	Respondents supported the fire station to be kept where it is as it had served the community well.	“
	287	Blackheath leaflet supporting the campaign to retain Wednesbury Fire Station.	“
<b>West Bromwich</b>	1	Respondent welcomed the proposal to return to two full time fire engines at the station.	The proposal to change the 12 hour second fire engine into a 24 hour fire engine was directly related to the closure of Smethwick fire station. Now that it has been decided not to proceed with the latter, the Authority has decided to leave the station as it is with 1 x 24 hour fire engine and 1 x 12 hour fire engine.

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<b>Woodgate Valley</b>			<p>No specific consultation replies were received regarding putting a second 24 hour fire engine at Woodgate Valley. However, the proposal was linked to the combined new station for Cradley Heath and Halesowen having 1 x 24 hour fire engine and 1 x 12 hour fire engine. Because the Authority are now minded to put 2 x 24 hour fire engines at the new combined Cradley Heath and Halesowen fire stations, the Authority have decided not to proceed with the original proposal regarding Woodgate Valley but instead to leave the station as it is with 1 x 24 hour fire engine.</p>