

THE NEXT STATION IS DUDLEY PORT

Where: Midway between Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton

Population: 51,013, in wards within 1 km of station.

Footfall: 544,410 in 2018/2019, growing by 8.67% a year

Service: Basically, half hourly all stations between Wolverhampton and Walsall via New Street. Trains in each direction serve here at the same time, which can make the narrow island platform feel crowded.

Facilities: At present, only the high level line is open, accessed by 25 steps from the ticket office to the platforms. At the top of the stairs is the small waiting room, seating just 6. Outside it, the yellow line to keep behind, at its narrowest has as little as 16 inches! In a typical hour, 14 non stop trains pass at about 65 mph. At the platform end, tracks cross the dual carriageway on separate bridges and alongside is the Ryland canal aqueduct so any track realignment is unlikely at that end. It is also only long enough for a 4 car train. The new Class 730/1s expected in 2022, are 5 cars. Can it be made longer at the Wolverhampton end? Yes but it would be very expensive to do so as Watery Lane goods loops begin just beyond the platform end.



Future: A new tram stop is coming to Dudley Port Low Level on the route from Wednesbury to Dudley [2022] and Brierley Hill [2023]. Although alternate trams will go to Birmingham and Wolverhampton, journeys by tram will take longer than train: 35 minutes by tram compared to 14 by train to Birmingham for example, so Dudley Port will be a major interchange. Doubling the service frequency to four trains an hour is planned. A lift is to be built from Low Level to the ticket office level at High Level, but that would not make the island platform accessible to the disabled. Network Rail has identified the need to build a new up [towards Birmingham] platform on the embankment on the north side of that track and make the island platform only for down trains. The photo opposite shows how difficult providing that new platform will be. That plan includes lifts to each platform, although CfR expects ramp access to the new platform to be possible. Despite its name, Dudley Port station is in Sandwell and its council, along with Dudley's and WMRE are looking to develop an excellent Integrated Transport Hub here. A feasibility study is already out to tender and should report by the end of 2020.



Car Parking: Space for 33 vehicles is alongside the access road from the A461 to the ticket office. Underneath the high level track at the Wolverhampton end of the island platform at right angles is low level. Here is another station car park, with 49 spaces. This was built before any other work on the Metro to ensure planning permission did not lapse.

History: The South Staffordshire Railway [SSR] from Dudley to Walsall opened in May 1850. Above it at right angles, the Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stour Valley Railway opened in February 1852. A connecting line allowed trains from Dudley to run up to the high level platforms until June 1964 just before the SSR stations closed. [This link ran from 'Sedgeley Junction', close to the turnpike to Sedgley, a spelling mistake that was never corrected.] Freight continued along the SSR until March 1993. Network Rail does not envisage reopening for freight until the 2040s. On the Stour Valley route until Sandwell and Dudley was developed, Dudley Port was the most important station between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, with even a sleeping car service to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Keith Flinders

Each edition looks at one of our stations that seldom makes the news