

## BORDESLEY CIRCUS (AREA 3)

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Bordesley was in the district of Yardley, which grew up around Bordesley Manor which was burnt down in Priestly Riots in 1791. Around that time the area was expanding in all directions, from Coventry Road to Stratford Road and River Rea to Warwick Road. Around 1838 it was absorbed into Birmingham.

Carr's Paints were established in 1910, John & Edwin Wright were involved in rope making with at "Universe Works", Whitworth Industrial Park is all that is left of The Whitworth Works of Charles H Pugh Ltd, who made lawn mowers. Whilst commercial premises dominate the west of the ring road, the largely residential area east of the ring road was renamed Bordesley Village following large scale clearance of back-to-back houses and redevelopment in the 1980s and 90s.

Bordesley is the real life setting of the BBC series Peaky Blinders, and St. Andrew's, the Blues Ground. Much development has been with the arts for example with the Custard Factory.

This decade will see a massive change to the area when much redevelopment will take place with residential apartments and opening up the River Rea for the first time since it was culverted.

### Transport in Bordesley

Transport has been an important feature of Bordesley from earliest times, with roads leading out of Birmingham heading towards Coventry, Warwick and Oxford. The canals entered Bordesley from the southeast as the Warwick Canal but that was later incorporated into the Grand Union Canal. The six Camp Hill locks raise the canal to Bordesley Junction, where the Digbeth Branch runs north-west, whilst the main line splits off north-east under Watery Lane Middleway.

The Chiltern Main Line railway from Moor Street Station to Bordesley Station runs along the blue brick Bordesley Viaduct parallel with Digbeth, Deritend and Bordesley High Street. The Bordesley Junction to Tyseley Line joins the Camp Hill Line at Bordesley Junction. Whilst the unfinished Duddeston Viaduct running parallel to Chiltern Line and then on a curve north easterly, it is possible this might be extended in plans to connect Moor Street with Leicester in the future.

The Camp Hill Line is a railway line in Birmingham between Kings Norton on the Cross-City Line and Birmingham New Street via Grand Junction on the main lines from Derby and Coventry.

Originally opened 1840 as the B&GR main line running from Gloucester and Camp Hill, it later extended into Curzon Street Station. Incorporated into the Midland Railway, it was diverted to New Street when that was opened in 1845. After 1885, the line was called the Camp Hill Line. In 1946 the line was converted to freight trains and some long-distance passenger trains and all the stations on the line were demolished.

The reinstatement of the passenger service started to be considered in 2007 and the contract to reopen the passenger service is underway with the building of 3 stations: Moseley Village, Pineapple Road and Kings Heath. Also, more recently in the plans yet to be ratified is a new station at Hazelwell. This could come into service provided bringing in redundant lines at Snow Hill and Moor Street Stations were carried out, including extending one of the redundant blue brick viaducts. At the time of writing three of the aforementioned stations are due for completion in 2024.

Bordesley was the home to the Birmingham Corporation Tramways & Omnibus Department at Adderley and Liverpool Streets. Later it moved to Bordesley High Street and the refurbished Central Birmingham & National Express Bus Station, will soon be served by the Metro undergoing construction along Bordesley High Street and will be connected to Metro running from Wolverhampton to Edgbaston Village. Later the Metro is hoped to run along the A45 to Birmingham Airport.

### **Bordesley Circus a *Node* on Middleway**

For the purposes of the Grid Project *Nodes*, Bordesley Circus is one of the 17 Circuses, part of the Middle Ring Road A4540 (Middleway) which encircles Birmingham City Centre and lies between Garrison Circus and Camp Hill Circus.

At the time Herbert Manzoni and his team of the Birmingham Planning Department were designing the Middle Ring Road Birmingham was still in the heady days of 'Motor City'. Its construction, including much demolition led to a massive change along its 6 miles. One thing of local importance was the changing of the route the Grand Union Canal took at the Camp Hill 5 locks, which passed under the railway bridges of West Midlands and Chiltern Railways. The headroom between the existing roadway and the undersides of the bridges was insufficient for high-sided commercial vehicles and double decker buses and restricted bus routes. So, before any major road building of the Bordesley Middle Ring Road could be

started, extra locks had to be built and the route of the new lower canal extended in a gentle curve to allow the height of the road to be dropped sufficiently to allow all permissible traffic to run on the new road and safely under the two railway bridges.

Bordesley Circus is another five-ways junction, with the following roads joining: Coventry Road (west) from the Stratford Road at Camp Hill; Watery Lane Middleway from Dartmouth Circus; the B4128 Coventry Road (east) linking to Cattel Road and Bordesley Green Road; A45 Small Heath Highway leading to The Swan Yardley and M42; Camp Hill Middleway leading to Five Ways (Edgbaston Village).

Since June 2021 the A4540 Birmingham Middleway divides parts of Bordesley as those areas inside the Middleway have been in the Birmingham Clean Air Zone.

### **Changes to Bordesley Circus 2014**

Unfortunately for the motorists and the planners, Bordesley Circus has had its issues, both with holds up in all directions and traffic accidents. In figures for 2014 a report stated that; “a busy Birmingham roundabout (Bordesley Circus) was Britain’s fifth most dangerous with 57 injuries over the previous five years”. The heavily congested Bordesley Circus on the Middleway was about to have major redevelopment work both to make it safer and to ease traffic flows at busy times, as part of the Government’s funding to remove bottlenecks at key junctions across the road network to improve national output. This amounted to a) construction of new carriageway through Bordesley Circus island, b) Signalisation and introduction of pedestrian crossings, d) Footway and carriageway resurfacing, e) Construction of a signal-controlled cycle gate.

When I went to walk around Bordesley Circus, at around midday on a Saturday in December, with the weather fair to good, the traffic on all the roads was busy but manageable. However, I could imagine at peak hours, morning and evening it would be more sluggish and I could imagine how much worse it would have been before these improvements.

I noticed comments on a website connected with the junctions on the A4540 Middle Ring Road, “on all but four of the numbered A4540 junctions have signal-controlled pedestrian crossings of the ring road, including Dartmouth Circus, and Five Ways which also have subways; Bordesley Circus has uncontrolled pedestrian crossings despite often heavy traffic. There are mostly lightly used pavements around the entire ring road, though several busy side roads joining the ring road have only uncontrolled crossings for pedestrians. Some parts of the pavement are designated cycle paths, but much of the rest of the pavement is used by cyclists illegally to avoid the heavy traffic and frequent roundabouts on the ring road”

So, I was pleased to be able to benefit from these improvements to the footpaths and crossings as I made my way safely around the very busy junctions and wasn't aware of cyclists on the pavements being an issue at that time of day.

### **My walk around Bordesley Circus**

Starting my walk down the Coventry Road from its junction with the Stratford Road, I arrived at Bordesley Circus I notice all the signage that was brought in, as part of the improvements. I explored the Coventry road and part of Watery Lane Middleway to look back at the Circus. The interesting point about a broadly flat sight you get the feeling that the cars are lining up for some kind of race, like a nightmare Grand Prix.

On the way across the grass reservation, I get a good view towards MacDonald's restaurant and the traffic going round the circus. Then over Watery Lane Middleway by the traffic controlled pedestrian crossings, I walked up towards junction of the Coventry Road with the circus, got a good view with traffic parked up below MacDonald's and traffic waiting to join leave A45 Small Heath Highway to join the Circus.

Below MacDonald's there was one set of pedestrian and cycle crossing over the inner carriageway of the A45 Small Heath Highway which I used to cross the A45 Small Heath Highway. Arriving safely over beside Bordesley Middleway, I had good views across the circus towards the Coventry Road. Just across the Small Heath Highway there is a broadly oval grassed reservation area that divides carriageways to allow vehicles to pass under the viaduct carrying the Camp Hill Line, which soon will be back carrying passengers to and from New Street and Kings Norton.

Whilst partly up the Bordesley Middleway, I dropped off and explored the changes made to the Grand Union Canal Camp Hill locks and discovered some very serious graffiti art being done under the Bordesley Middleway Bridge. Nearby I also inspected the arches by Lawden Road, used by a number of small businesses.

Whilst under the two railway bridges, I was trying to imagine the problems confronting lorry drivers trying to judge whether their vehicles would pass under the railway bridges over Sandy Lane (later to become Bordesley Middleway), in former times. I had never realised how significant this must have been to our bus network before the Middleway opened new and revised routes.

Crossing over Bordesley Middleway near the Circus, I had completed my journey around Bordesley Circus and realised the scale of the work that was involved to make this significant

Node of the Middleway even if it had to be tweaked to make it work better and safer. My return up Coventry Road and the Stratford Road made me appreciate this City never rests on its laurels.

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Any views expressed in this article are mine and are my interpretations of any of the documents that I have encountered, I apologise for any inaccuracies.

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