



11 August 2016

Bridget Phillipson MP
Member of Parliament
for Houghton and Sunderland South
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Bridget

BUS SERVICES – PREMIER ROAD, PLAINS FARM

Thank you for your letter and petition, dated 2 June 2016, and also the invite to the residents' meeting at Plains Farm Club on 15 July 2016. You will recall this meeting was attended by myself and my colleague David Parker, and followed the Sunderland bus network changes of 5 June 2016. For information we are continuing to examine scenarios for the East Herrington area, discussed at the coffee morning at Oakfield Court, and we will respond directly to Councillor Galbraith regarding that request in due course.

In our meeting, we received requests to reinvestigate the bus service provision in this local area, namely to see if bus services 18/19 could be reinstated, or if a cost-effective alternative bus service provision could be made.

We were requested to investigate three specific scenarios, namely:

- 1) Reinstating the former routes 18 and 19 via Premier Road in lieu of their current (and traditional) operations via Durham Road,
- 2) A diversion of Service 3 via Silksworth Lane, Premier Road and Pearl Road, in lieu of its operations via Durham Road,
- 3) A double-run arrangement for Service 3 from Durham Road via the full length of Premier Road to the Silksworth Lane roundabout, and then returning via Premier Road to rejoin its current route at Pearl Road.

So as to ensure a robust examination of the three different options, another member of the commercial team has undertaken the review, and I have detailed this outcome below:

Option 1

Following further analysis of the historic data for Premier Road this illustrates that the overall customer demand for routes 18 and 19 was significantly lower than the customer demand for these services along the Durham Road section. As highlighted at the meeting we are struggling with the financial position of this service and it would not be prudent for the longer term interest of the service to implement any change to its route.

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Option 2

In examining the Durham Road and Silksworth Lane patronage profiles, it is again evident that customer demand on Durham Road is far greater, so to remove Services 3 from Durham Road would result in a greater overall hardship. We appreciate that one view at the meeting was that there were other buses along Durham Road for customers in that area. Unfortunately the number of boarding passenger compared with Plains Farm would not be a viable option.

Option 3

In examining this third option, it was important to understand whether the timings associated with the double-run could be accommodated within the existing operating cycle time or not. To operate the additional mileage of 1.03 miles (Pearl Road end to the Silksworth Lane roundabout and return to Perth Road) for both the inbound and outbound journeys, the additional time needed in the service would require an additional vehicle to be procured for the service plus the additional operating costs of around £90,000 to £120,000 per annum to fulfil the timetable. Unfortunately this option would not be financially sustainable and regrettably this option can not be realistically considered. In addition there is compelling evidence from across the sector that such a double-run arrangement could well prove unpopular with customers further along the route (for instance from Farrington and Gilley Law), and this additional diversion to customer journeys could materially depress patronage from those areas, thereby undermining the wider economics associated with the service.

Although we have fully scenario tested these options, we fully accept this response will be disappointing for your petitioners and yourself. Whilst a partial alternative service does remain in this local area (the supported "compass" route 99), we will nonetheless periodically review the provision of Stagecoach routes in the local area, and if, over time, we are able to identify a cost effective and sustainable solution as demand evolves, we will of course contact you directly.

In closing, thank you for articulating the feedback of your petitioners, and the invite to the residents meeting. I regret that we are unable to deliver a sustainable solution in this instance.

Kind Regards



COLIN NEWBURY
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

cc Commercial Director
Commercial Manager
Operations Manager – Sunderland