

Dear Mr Bridges

Dickens Heath Parish Council are very concerned about the adverse impact of the proposed option for Dickens Heath in your consultation document - this single service to Shirley, which will no longer give direct access to Solihull, will reduce the level of connectivity to the Dickens Heath Community.

Dickens Heath is a fast growing vibrant community, set in a rural location, that is currently over-dependent on the private motor car and with a high level of car ownership – in part this is attributable to the historically poor public transport service. The bus service as currently timetabled has improved, but is let down by the failure of the Diamond Operator over service delivery with frequent no-shows, breakdowns and late running. The rail service from Whitlock's End with three trains per hour is good but does not provide direct access to Solihull.

Against this background, the Parish Council had anticipated the pending review - which had been delayed, we understood, to allow for a more thorough and comprehensive assessment. But it has produced a single proposal in its S2 West Shirley Circular Option 2 that in practical terms substantially reduces the level of service for Dickens Heath. The proposed circulatory service would extend the journey time to a Shirley Interchange and then require a second bus into Solihull - which is our residents' primary destination. It is the Parish Council's view that should this option be implemented, only those residents with no other option would use the service - leading to increased car journeys and a significant reduction in bus patronage. The composition of Dickens Heath has also changed in that the new recently constructed developments at David Wilson and Bellway include a significant proportion of homes in the affordable/social housing category where demand for access to public transport is higher than perhaps the original village which was 100% market housing.

Public awareness of the proposed changes has only arisen later in the consultation period and we arranged a special section of our Parish Council Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October to give residents an opportunity to air their views on the consultation and for the Parish Council to reflect concerns in this response. We would have liked to have seen some statistical information on the actual destination of Dickens Heath residents on the S3 but in the circumstances can only reflect the indicated feedback we have received. This is that the vast majority of our residents' final destination is Solihull and while

they don't mind the route being through Shirley - this is not generally their ultimate destination of choice. Examples of concerns were for those that work in Solihull, for young people at the schools who aren't able to use the school buses and for those attending the 6th form college, along with the facts that having to get 2 buses in to Solihull would take longer, be much more inconvenient, and cost twice as much.

Dickens Heath Parish Council, on behalf of the village community, is looking for an alternative option that provides a direct link between the village and Solihull and would look for the 30 minute service from the village to be retained.

We are aware of the time constraints facing TfWM, as set out in your recent Email of 10<sup>th</sup> October, and the other considerations you raised but would like to suggest an alternative. An alternative possible option could be for a shorter route terminating at Dickens Heath to still link with Solihull, along with a longer rural circular service to link with the Shirley network. This would reduce the level of any duplication while more closely meeting our local and a wider community need for those large residential areas West of the Stratford Road.

Both Cheswick Green and Tidbury Green Parish Councils also have concerns about the proposed changes to the bus services for their communities, and I think we would all welcome the opportunity for a public meeting which would allow our residents to talk through their concerns with representatives of TfWM.