

Officer Decisions

Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment - Dave Black

Summary of Matter or Issue Requiring Decision

Exeter City Council's proposal to proceed with closing the existing Bus Station in Exeter requires a letter

27th September 2017
Mr M Parkinson
Deputy Chief Executive
Exeter City Council
Civic Centre
Paris Street
Exeter
EX1 1JN

Dear Mark

Further to our conversation, I agreed to write emphasising the County Council's concerns regarding the proposal to proceed with closing the existing bus station, despite the bus station and leisure centre projects being delayed by 12 months.

When the project was considered by the Devon's Development Management Committee one of the major concerns raised by the public was the impact of moving the bus station to a smaller site and all the issues this involved. However, the Committee recognised the wider positive impact and agreed the proposals. Since then we have worked with the City Council and partners to agree the details of the new bus station facility on a reduced footprint east of the existing site on Cheeke Street. Whilst this is a smaller, less convenient location to the existing facility and there are problems with the move, the wider benefits of having a more modern facility and the ability to maximise the economic value of the existing site are fully recognised.

The impact of the closure of the existing site was considered by Exeter HATOC. They agreed a set of proposals to move the bus station 'on-street' for an interim period while the new bus facility was under construction. A level of inconvenience to bus passengers, without reasonable waiting facilities, difficult layover facilities, changes to on street parking as well as additional bus-related congestion in Sidwell Street was acceptable to the County Council on a short-term basis.

It is understood that the interface design required for the leisure centre and bus station projects and tender process will delay the commencement of the project by 12 months, possibly more. During this period, you are proposing to close the existing bus station to buses and long-distance coaches. This will mean the existing bus station site will remain empty and unused (probably quickly becoming derelict) while the County bus and National coach service passengers will be 'on-street' without bus station facilities for at least 2 years, potentially longer. This will cause a huge amount of public dissatisfaction, impacting directly on captive public transport users, all of which is considered unnecessary until work starts in earnest. In addition, there are numerous operational issues such as layover space, driver welfare and difficulty in finding bus stops. This will have a significant impact on passenger experience and could see patronage levels dropping and operator costs rising. The viability and frequency of the rural bus service is very fragile. The impact of this arrangement could have knock on effects with service reductions undoing all the work we have achieved over the last ten years in improving services and increased patronage. It would seem sensible to continue to use of the existing bus station facility until the site is needed to commence the works for the new bus station and leisure centre. I understand there are service diversions required, we agreed these could almost certainly take place around the operational site with suitable traffic management. If you need help in designing this we have the necessary experience. Once the new contract is let and the construction is ready to commence, the County Council will quickly put in place all of the necessary traffic regulatory orders as prepared for the interim 'on-street' solution.

I understand that you see the closure as beneficial to maintain momentum with the project, demonstrate action and reducing the risk of land acquisition problems. However, in terms of impact on the bus passengers it is not justifiable and will cause significant public dissatisfaction. I strongly urge you to consider the above before taking a decision to close the bus station on 28th October. Yours sincerely

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation & Environment
cc Bob Dennison - Manage Director Stagecoach SW

Summary of Reason(s) for Decision Taken

Summary of Alternatives or Options considered and rejected

Internal discussions suggested this way forward and there in no other option but to write.

Details of any conflict of interest and dispensation granted to the Officer taking the decision or by any Member of the Council in delegating responsibility for any specific express delegation

none

Contact for enquiries/further information

Dave Black

Decision Date

27 September 2017

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