

**Statement to The Communities, Transport and Environment Policy
Development and Scrutiny Panel**

Monday 19th September 2016

Background

I represent the local residents of, and other stakeholders in, Upper Oldfield Park and set out below our objections to the re-routing of the U1 bus down Upper Oldfield Park.

1. From 4 September 2016, there have been buses timetabled, including double decker buses along the road, to run up to every 7-15 minutes up to 2.30am and then hourly for the rest of the night until 6.44am, the daily average number of buses being as many as **158** with a weekly average of more than **1000**.

2. From the limited correspondence received from First Group in response to complaints, it seems the U1 bus was rerouted down our road following the decision by First Group to use double decker buses and due to concerns these would not fit under the railway bridge on their previous route along Lower Oldfield Park.

Objections:

Our particular objections are as follows;

1. Road Safety

There is no pedestrian crossing on UOP and the rerouting of U1 along UOP simply adds to existing safety concerns. There is significant danger to pedestrians (especially to child pedestrians attending school with approximately 1,133 pupils), including vehicles having to drive into driveways to allow buses to pass. The increased traffic flows (150 buses per day) and resultant congestion increase the risk of accidents.

There are bad sightlines and minimal visibility for access to houses with U1 increasing the risk of accident.

There is considerable congestion along the road and at either ends particularly at the junction with Wells Road as buses seek to turn into UOP.

3. Congestion

Upper Oldfield Park is an unsuitable road, being especially narrow in places. It is very congested with traffic at busy times of day due to parents and visitors to the school, doctors' surgeries, dental surgeries, bed and breakfasts and hotels, the West Wing and soon to be Norland Nanny college, as well as the normal flow of traffic of local residents. Parking on the road is restricted to those with residents' permits or 2 hourly bays. Businesses have three permits each and the 2 hourly bays are used by patients and visitors, including parents picking up their children. There are already too few and it is submitted that reducing the provision of these in order better to accommodate the flow of buses where they are not needed would make the school, surgery and businesses unviable.

3. Consultation

There was no consultation with residents, businesses or other stakeholders affected which is bad commercial practice, unacceptable and unreasonable. Objections made to First Group by Bath and North East Somerset Council were ignored.

4. Local businesses and Quality of life of local residents in a Conservation Area

Upper Oldfield Park is in a Conservation Area. The volume of unnecessary buses generates more noise, vibration and pollution and reduces the ability to access houses. In the evenings, night time and at weekends Upper Oldfield Park is a quiet residential area with little traffic. Having buses running every 15 minutes up to 2.30am and then overnight is completely intrusive and unreasonable, disturbing residents and causing complaints from guest at B&Bs, thus impacting local businesses.

Objections and Support from other Stakeholders

1. Hayesfield School

We have received a Statement from Emma Yates Headteacher at Hayesfield School in support of our objections, voicing her concerns about pupil safety and congestion and stating:

“Whilst Hayesfield Girls' School is delighted that the ‘bendy buses’ will no longer be travelling up Brougham Hayes and over the railway bridge, we are concerned to learn that these will be replaced by double decker buses routed along Upper Oldfield Park.

Upper Oldfield Park is an already very busy road with bends that regularly cause pinch points for drivers travelling in opposite directions. To navigate double decker buses through this residential area will cause further difficulties and introduce further safety risks to pedestrians and particularly students of Hayesfield Girls’ School and Mixed Sixth Form. There will be a particular difficulty with congestion arising when coach parties leave or arrive at the School on Upper Oldfield Park for scheduled school trips, which are not infrequent.

Our preference would be for the buses to remain as ‘non-bendy buses’ and to be routed along the Lower Bristol Road only, which is a wider road.

We see no reason why these buses are routed through residential areas. Our students are able to walk the short distance from the main road to both the Brougham Hayes Campus and Upper Oldfield Park Campus.”

2. Number 18 Surgery

An additional statement has also been received from the doctors’ surgery:

“To First Bus and Banes Council

I am writing on behalf of the GP's at Number 18 Surgery.

We are extremely concerned about the increased congestion and safety of patients, residents and pupils in Upper Oldfield Park, since the introduction of the U1 bus service at the beginning of September.

Upper Oldfield Park is already a very busy residential road during the day, with only single lane traffic in parts.

We have noticed this week that the congestion has been building up with the addition of the U1 buses.

Some of our patients have had difficulty getting out of their cars and also crossing the road due to the increased traffic, especially with the large buses and we are concerned that there will be an accident.

We are also concerned that when we need to call an ambulance, in an emergency, to take patients to hospital, the added congestion will delay the ambulance from getting through. The ambulance service also use this route to cut through and gain access, quicker, to other roads in the area.

When this service is increased at the end of September, we will see this congestion increase again.

We are requesting that FirstBus rethink this route and move the bus stops to the lower Bristol road. This will only be a short walk for the students and will also encourage a healthier lifestyle.

We strongly request that you take notice of our request and the requests from Hayesfield school and the residents.

Yours sincerely

Helen Harris

(on behalf of the GP partners)

Helen Harris

Practice Manager

Number 18 Surgery

3. Other interested parties

Parents of pupils at Hayesfield Girls' School have expressed their concerns about the bus service and are in the process of preparing a statement through the PTA setting out their objections.

Conclusion

1. Current routing of U1 along UOP has a significant detrimental effect on:

Safety

Noise pollution (including vibrations)

Air pollution

Congestion

Access

Privacy

Visual amenity

Conservation Area.

2. Implications of re-routing U1 to Lower Bristol Road:

First Group: none if routed along Lower Bristol Road. (Financial if routed along LOP to replace proposed double decker buses).

Safety of pedestrians on UOP will be improved

Quality of life for residents will be improved.

Students: none

Equalities: none

Staffing: none

Economic: none

3. Accordingly, we request that the buses be re-routed away from UOP with immediate effect. As the U1 bus runs in a loop from Bath bus station via LOP and back to the bus station, the environmentally friendly thing to do is to walk to the bus station (10 mins) and abolish the unnecessary Lower Oldfield loop altogether. If a student pick up point in this vicinity is required then surely the right route is to stay on the main A36 Lower Bristol Road, and pick up at the Pines Way bus stop. Most students get on this service at the Holiday Inn in any event. We also note that a large number of students now reside elsewhere, having moved out of the Oldfield Park area.

4. We are concerned that our objections are acted upon without delay. With the start of the term for the university fast approaching we wish to avoid any upturn in the number of buses along our road and the purchase by students of season tickets.

5. Additionally, we request that the council immediately impose a bye-law restricting buses from access on the road (save for school coaches).

6. Without prejudice to our objections with the rerouting of U1 along UOP, we seek an unequivocal undertaking from First Group that buses on U1 will not be permitted to make unofficial stops along Upper Oldfield Park (a practice that has already occurred) and that bus drivers will be warned that anyone doing so will be disciplined. In addition to the inconvenience this causes to the flow of traffic and residents, we question the public liability consequences of such unauthorised acts. We also seek an undertaking that no bus stops will be implemented without adequate prior warning to local residents who may lodge objections.

7. The residents of the road are in the progress of compiling a petition and are expecting support from all stakeholders. This is not a matter that is likely simply to go away.

8. In recent years, there has been an explosion in the number of students in Bath, resulting in a number of difficulties concerning traffic flow. In addition, it seems our city is suffering from the 1980's legislation deregulating public transport and those seeking to exploit this. What we are looking for is a triumph of fairness and common sense over profit and the facilitation of student movement at the expense of residents of Bath. There is no necessity for a route along Upper Oldfield Park, the route does not service the road and yet the road is made to suffer for it.

Questions for First Group Plc

Mr M Roberts is registered to speak on our behalf at the panel meeting. In summary, we wish the following questions to be put to First Group:-

1. Will First Group now remove buses from Upper Oldfield Park on the grounds that this road is unsuitable and unsafe on the basis that running 150 double decker buses a day down a local residential street with the unacceptable safety risks, intrusion and disturbance that causes when there is no support at all from the local community and a perfectly viable alternative is available cannot be justified.

2. Why did they choose not to consult and ignore the advice of the council who raised a verbal objection to the proposal? This is an abuse of their powers under bus deregulation.

Mrs Sarah Carney