

April 26th 2023

By e-mail only: bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com

Charlotte Glancy
Stroud Local Plan Examination Programme Officer
Banks Solutions
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Dear Ms. Glancy,

Comprehensive Summary of Bus Service and Infrastructure Measures in support of the Local Plan Review 2040

As I trust the Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State have deduced, Stagecoach has endeavoured to provide the highest possible level of support and advice to assist Stroud District Council and its wider consultant team arrive at a soundly based Local Plan Review, over the duration of the genesis of the Plan to date. This reflects our recognition of the importance of the plan-led system, as the mechanism best placed to arrive at a properly conceived strategic approach to integrating land-use and transport planning. Equally, we strongly and explicitly have supported the key objectives and broad architecture of the spatial strategy – including, from the outset, the case for appropriated sited new settlements - as we trust the Inspectors also recognise.

Following the Examination in Public Session covering Main Matter 11b on Thursday 23rd March, the presiding Inspectors asked me to provide to the Council and the Examination a comprehensive overview of the public transport measures relating to bus services and bus priority measures on the sustainable movement corridors, that we considered is lacking from the plan and its evidence base so far.

I have accordingly this evening remitted the accompanying map and spreadsheet to the District Council and its consultant AECOM. I am additionally copying the key officers and consultants of the County Council.

I very much hope that this material assist the Councils and the Inspector in demonstrating that the key logic of the spatial strategy, articulated around the A38 and A419/A4135 sustainable movement corridors, is inherently robust.

I have had my attention drawn to statements made about this Company by one Examination participant, that promoting Sharpness Vale, specifically in response to questions from Gloucestershire County Council in Statement SG23 and its appendices.

It is in my view neither appropriate nor terribly helpful to provide any kind of detailed rebuttal to what is a very long document. Some of the pre-COVID evidence relates to contracted services that were not even Stagecoach operated. It suffices to say only that where Stagecoach has adjusted (not withdrawn) services,

within Stroud District these reflect relatively minor changes, some of which temporary. No commercial service in Stroud District has been withdrawn in Stroud district since COVID. There have certainly been serious and very regrettable disruptions in service delivery owing to shortage of staff, reflecting national issues that are far from restricted to this business or even just the transport sector. Strenuous efforts over many months mean service mileage delivery is now generally at or very close to 100% of that scheduled.

In no case are these withdrawals or timetable adjustments highlighted in the material indicative of a commercial business "in decline" in Stroud District.

It is notable that the steady improvement in bus services across the District until 2020, is not addressed by this work. The key routes 62, 63, 64 and 65 all, directly following or related to the sustainable movement corridors at the heart of the plan, have in fact seen significant reinforcement prior to 2020, and have broadly remained stable or even improved since. This is strong evidence of the robustness of the Stroud Sustainable Transport Strategy that is centred around exactly these corridors.

Stagecoach is indeed operating demand-responsive services elsewhere in the UK, in all cases as a contractor to local authorities and funded by them, mostly on limited-duration arrangements of less than 3 years. Stagecoach has a very long history of industry-leading innovation in passenger transport that needs no discussion here. The company pioneered experiments in comprehensive commercial DRT operation, including the "Yellow Taxibus" in Fife in 2003-2005. This lengthy and widespread experience, across all forms of road based passenger transport, supports the advice we have advanced in our duly made representations.

I trust that the above and the attached is helpful to the Inspectors. I wish the Council and the Examination well in the vital job of putting in place an up-to-date development strategy for Stroud District, meeting the complex challenges of providing for significant development needs in the most sustainable manner possible.



Nick Small

Head of Strategic Development and the Built Environment