

LITTLETON & HARESTOCK PARISH COUNCIL (LHPC)

Feedback from residents regarding changes to local bus routes & timetables

Dear Sir / Madam

1. Introduction

Following the changes in September 2025 to bus routes and timetables within our parish, we have received feedback from numerous residents about how these changes have been affecting them, particularly for those living in Littleton. To many, there is no clear understanding of why the no 16 was rerouted to follow the previous no 7 route through Harestock with the no 7 rerouted to follow the no 16 route, plus an added detour via Teg Down.

This has resulted in more complicated timetables and much inconvenience. Furthermore, it is clear that this is no simple, technical matter, but has deep personal and psychological impacts. As one person has expressed it:

Seeing the new time-table for bus number 7 and 16 in September last year, was mortifying. There was not so much outrage at the bus stop as tears of despair.

LHPC previously sent a letter in August 2025 to Hampshire County Council, which was copied to Stagecoach ahead of the changes. Although Stagecoach is the commercial operator of the services, regrettably, we did not receive any response, but the local fears expressed in that letter have clearly become well-founded. (N.B. That 'August letter' is attached for your easy reference).

One resident has helpfully compiled a 'before and after' comparison for some of the issues as follows:

Table 1: Bus Timetable Comparison

Timetable before 31 August 2025	New Timetable
Bus 16 went via Weeke, giving access to a surgery, pharmacy, Aldi, Waitrose, Adult Education, various clinics, charity shops and Costa coffee.	Bus 16 goes via Harestock, even though there is a thrice hourly bus 3 between Harestock and Winchester City.
The no 16 bus serviced the length of Main Road, including 5 stops, linking the whole village to Weeke.	The no 7 bus only services one stop in the village, Dean Down Drove, a steep climb from the pond and beyond many less able residents. So, the no 7 is not an alternative to the no 16.
The no 7 operated approximately hourly in each direction.	In any case, the frequency of no 7 has been cut to just three per day.
The no 16 took the most optimal route and stopped at Winchester rail station. The no 4 bus served Teg Down hourly.	The new route for the no 7 includes a 10 minute detour through Teg Down. The nearest stop for the rail station is Worthy Road, a five minute walk crossing busy roads.

Timetable before 31 August 2025	New Timetable
The no 7 departed the city centre at 11.20, a half hour earlier.	The earliest practicable bus from the city centre to Littleton on weekdays is 11.50, meaning a minimum 2 hours stay, which makes it tempting to use the car when time is short.
There was a bus into city at 18.20.	The last bus into the city (no 7) is at 12.39.

We believe it would be beneficial for Stagecoach to receive feedback on the direct experiences of our residents. This has been gathered from over a dozen responses to a January Parish Council newsletter item. Several themes have emerged, which are set out below:

2. Inconvenience

Many of the regular users of the local bus services are elderly and/or have mobility difficulties and do not drive. They are heavily reliant on public transport to go about their everyday lives.

One resident explains how there was an immediate adverse impact caused by the changes:

*In the first week following the changes, with two medical appointments lined up according to the old bus routes, it took me **almost five hours** to make an appointment in Weeke at 12.15 and a blood test at the hospital at 14.05. It involved a lot of expensive waiting before, between, and after, due to such a poor service and the subsequent need to buy coffees while hanging around. I got home exhausted.*

On the old (pre-Sept 2025) timetable, it was possible to catch the 09:27 no 16 from Littleton, to either shop at the Waitrose or Aldi supermarkets, attend Friarsgate medical appointments, collect prescriptions, attend the podiatrist, go to the post office, or visit other local shops or cafe at Weeke / Stoney Lane. This often allowed users sufficient time to catch the returning no 16 bus, which left the bus station at 10:15. The re-routing of the no 16 now makes this impossible, with some declaring that they have to resort to expensive taxis. Now residents need to take the no 7 (that only stops at one end of the village) at 09:39, but are then faced with a lengthy wait for the no 7 that leaves the City Centre bus station at 11:50.

Another resident comments in relation to the no7 bus returning from the City Centre that:

the only bus we can return from Winchester on, which stops in Littleton, is the 11:50 which arrives at 12:12 at Deane Down Drove, via Teg Down which takes approximately 10-15 mins. I now arrive home 40 minutes later than I did under the timing of the old and better service.

Others have commented on now needing to walk along Stoney Lane to get the no 16, but this can involve further waiting around.

Making arrangements and appointments that were once quite possible, are now being made impossible or inconvenient.

3. Confusion

There is an inherent problem with the bus timetables (especially that for the no 7) being particularly irregular. People are unlikely to memorise it unless they absolutely have to, compared to, for example, knowing that a bus comes at 10 past the hour, every hour. Consequently, it is feared that fewer and fewer people will bother to take the bus, demand for it will be seen to be dropping, leading to Stagecoach withdrawing the service(s) further.

If people do not clearly know what is on offer, they will take the easy or very expensive way out, by driving into town if they are able, or forced to book a taxi.

4. Trips once possible are now virtually impossible

Familiarity with the previous timetables allowed residents to more easily plan their week and days out. For a number of people, this is now not so easy. One such person illustrates the ramifications clearly:

I frequently (3 times a week) used the no 16 bus (9.27am) to go to the leisure centre for my activities starting at 10am. The longer route into Winchester now means I cannot get there in time. Also, I would now have to leave the leisure centre early to get the 12.20 back. I used to use the bus to take my grandson swimming so it's too late for the 10am session but if I were to opt for 11am, finishing at 12 noon it is then too late to get the 12.20 return bus from Winchester which would mean the next one which is now not until 14.20. The result is that I now don't use the bus, but use my car.

Clearly, these changes have not been for the better!

5. Stranded or having to 'kill time'

The loss of any means of returning home between 12.20 and 14.20 is a serious gap in the timetable. Some users now feel obliged to spend money and time in coffee shops or taking a taxi. Cafés would appear to be doing well on the back of the inconvenience of the timetables!

6. Reliability

A number of people have commented that the previous bus timetables were generally reliable. Now it appears regular users feel it is more of a lottery, as buses do not always turn up when scheduled to do so.

The first no 7 bus of the day (8.07 from Littleton) is often late and unreliable. With the school run traffic on the Stockbridge Road, it is then often further delayed. One person who has experienced this can't afford to be late to Peter Symonds college. The person then goes on to say that on 27th January (i.e. last month), the no 7 bus went straight down the Stockbridge Road, so she was forced to walk to work at Peter Symonds College in the rain and through the Kennel Lane flood. This was her 4th documented example since mid-December. It would seem that drivers either do not know their route or somehow forget to drive via Littleton! The variations in the no 7 route at different

times of the day may be leading to some confusion among drivers, who are also known to hate the turning from Main Road into Dean Down Drove.

7. Forced to walk longer distances

The changes to the no 7 have been disruptive for those who used to be able to get the bus both to and from work in the city centre. Some say they can now normally still get to work, BUT they have to catch the no 3 back to Harestock and walk the rest of the way home. As you probably realise, this requires a long walk back to Littleton village, which in the winter evenings means walking in the dark, which for women in particular, may feel less safe, and in recent weeks getting very wet.

Another respondent, however, is not now able to get to work on time. They explain:

I work full time (8:30-5:30) and work 5 days out of 7, including some weekends and bank holidays. I used to get the no7 that would get to Littleton at 7:40, but due to the bus now not arriving in Littleton until 8:07 and now going down Stockbridge Road, it doesn't get me to work in time. I now leave my house at 7:15 to walk to Weeke to get the 7:40 bus to town to get to work on time.

For others seeking to use the No 7, the challenge for those living towards the other end of the village is climbing the hill from the pond to the bus stop at the end of Kennel Lane / Deane Down Drove, particularly for those who may be less able. For these people, the no 7 is proving to be no real alternative to the no 16.

8. Limited afternoon services

Another resident has explained that there is a lack of afternoon buses, which exacerbates the problem of getting to and from Weeke / Stoney Lane from Littleton. Once the no 16 bus has left the village at 13.52 and travelled through Littleton, people feel marooned. There is no other option to take them out during the afternoon.

An example is I have a doctor's appointment at 3.30 pm. Not a good time for buses. I either have to get there hours early via a number 7 or a 16 and a walk along Stoney Lane, again meaning getting there very early. So the only option I can really do is walk. It takes about 30 plus minutes. Then coming home, there are no buses for hours so I will have to walk back again. Not really ideal as it will be getting dark, Kennel Lane isn't the best to walk along and is a bit isolated.

The limited afternoon services impact local commuting too, including if working at the weekend. For one such affected person who works until 17.30, they don't have a bus to get them back to Littleton outside of Sparsholt College days. They either have to catch a no 3 or 75 and then walk a mile arriving home feeling exhausted after a day at work.

9. No late service

The community / village has continued to suffer from a lack of evening or Sunday services for quite some time now. Previously, a bus into town around 18.30 and a taxi back was a feasible option if one wanted to enjoy an evening out in town.

In addition, village residents feel that the Saturday bus services are derisory, whilst any hope for a Sunday service continues to be non-existent.

10. Reduced college holiday service

The last no 7 bus of the weekday day doesn't run when Sparsholt College isn't teaching. On both 1st September 2025 and 5th January 2026, which were the school start of term days but not a college day, the Stagecoach app said the 17.50 from the bus station would not run. Prospective users that day had to get alternative buses and walk the rest of the way, but apparently the bus did run anyway - presumably empty. On 5th January, for one person, this meant catching the 75 and walking in snow and ice along Harestock Road and Kennel Lane from the Andover Road stop.

11. Publicity and signage

Several respondents commented that the new timetables were not put up in a timely manner, or at all stops. Bus signage remains extremely patchy. Even now, 6 months on from the changes, route number 'stickers' have either not been added, changed or removed from bus stops as appropriate, not just in Littleton, but through Harestock and Bereweek Avenue, or along the Stockbridge Road. This seems to be a failing at a most basic level.

There was not even a poster on the buses this year about changes to timetables over the recent Christmas period. Whilst it was all on the app for those who are 'tech-savvy', our elderly residents often had no idea what was going on. This seems inexcusable.

12. Summary of key issues

In summary, Littleton residents in particular have lost access to surgeries and shops, have seen a drastic cut in services, incur longer transit times and a timetable, especially for the no 7 that is irregular and, in some respects, confusing. These changes have clearly had a disproportionate adverse effect on the Parish's elderly and most vulnerable residents.

When these changes were made, did Stagecoach undertake any kind of Equality Impact Assessment which could have identified and pre-empted a number of these issues from arising? As it is, the ability of numerous residents to organize and go about their everyday life has been hampered, resulting in a reduction in both their independence and quality of life which risks contributing to their greater sense of social isolation.

Several people have remarked upon a real or perceived reduction of people waiting at the bus stops. One comments that the number of people who used to get the early morning no 7 bus used to be 6-10, but is now maybe 2. Another corroborates this, commenting, "I am the only adult here plus one school student. We were regularly 6-8 adults before."

For the no 16 bus, a group of residents would previously wait confidently for the 9:29 bus at The Hall Way stop in the village. Now following its re-routing, one respondent remarks that the 09.29 departure on weekdays is often full after picking up passengers in Harestock, so that by the time it gets to the sheltered housing at the top of Bereweke Avenue, the elderly residents there can't always get on, especially if they have walking aids or trollies. People have heard that these elderly people are commonly distressed. Perhaps this is an unintended consequence of the re-routing of the no 16, and the *de facto* reduction in service along this stretch of the route now that the once hourly no 7 travels into the City via the Stockbridge Road.

There is an inherent contradiction in that whilst people are being encouraged by government, local councils and bus companies themselves to use public transport more as it helps combat congestion in cities, cuts pollution and is generally a more sustainable option, in this case, the recent changes to bus routes and timetables in and around our parish have been making it so much harder, and even perhaps reversed progress in the sustainable direction.

There is a widespread fear that the impact of the issues outlined above will affect any decision to keep the service(s) operating. One woman declares she “feels distressed that I can't support my bus twice a day, everyday, now it's unreliable and infrequent. We remain committed to the 17.50 after work, but fear Stagecoach may not continue it long term.” Perhaps the worst verdict is to learn that some vulnerable people are less able to get out leading to their social isolation, or and against their will, resorting to driving their car, even though they would rather not.

13. Potential improvements

In order to be constructive and address these issues, several suggestions for improvements and changes have been made, including:

- improving the frequency within the structure of the revised services
- selectively divert some of the other existing services, such as the more frequent no 3 bus that runs from Winchester to Weeke and Harestock and back so that an extra or occasional no 3 bus continues onto Littleton.
- introduce an extra or special service, especially to the Weeke shops and importantly, the doctors and pharmacy. Perhaps a service starting from Crawley Church via Littleton would be suitable, so that the whole of Littleton would be catered for. A special morning service via Weeke would find favour among many, and perhaps an afternoon one too.

Some people are becoming creative in trying to co-ordinate different timetables and changing buses. One such person declares:

I have spent hours poring over the times and links, especially to the Harestock bus route no 3, to work out how I could manage a medical appointment in Weeke or at St Paul's that wouldn't take all day to achieve, and involve wasting hours of my time.

I have found by a thorough and deep search of the Stagecoach App that it is possible to make a counter-intuitive journey from Littleton to Sparsholt and by staying on the bus,

*return, via Weeke, to town – a 42 minute journey. **Is it really too much to ask that the nos 7 or 77 divert via Deane Down Drove into Littleton and back up Main Road to allow us out in the afternoon?***

Whilst making small tweaks might bring some benefits, the depth of feeling in the parish suggests that there is a case for looking again at revising the routes, and even acknowledging that the September 2025 changes have not worked as perhaps anticipated by Stagecoach. **Certainly, there is a strong view that a return to the pre-September routes would suit more people.**

Finally, at a broader level, the north of Winchester suffers from a lack of direct connections to the Royal Hampshire County Hospital. Has a service from or through the Parish been considered that would include the now unserved Fulflood area, go directly via the Romsey Road to the hospital and onto the rail station and City Centre? This would have some merit and allow people to avoid needing to change buses in the city if they need to get to the hospital.

14. Next steps

It is hoped that Stagecoach will review its services in this area and make changes so as to provide a less confusing and a more reliable, convenient service.

To this end, we hope Stagecoach accepts this feedback in the constructive spirit in which it is intended. The Council would be willing to discuss these matters with the company and even convene a public forum with your participation.

The Council looks forward to receiving your response.

Cllr David Tozer
(Vice Chair)

February 2026

Cc

Gary Westbrook, Chief Executive, Hampshire County Council

Cllr Nick Adams-King, Leader of HCC

Cllr Lulu Bowerman, HCC Executive Member for Highways and Passenger Transport

Cllr Jan Warwick, HCC Deputy Leader and HCC member for Winchester Downlands

WCC Cllrs M. Tod, K. Learney, J. Batho, J. Morris, C. Horrill, S. Godfrey

Danny Chambers, MP

LITTLETON AND HARESTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

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Gary Westbrook
Chief Executive
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15 August 2025

Dear Mr Westbrook

Re: Concerns regarding new Bus Timetable Changes for Littleton & Harestock

1. It is with consternation that Littleton & Harestock Parish Council feels compelled to write and express our concerns upon hearing news of the impending alterations and reduced bus services affecting our parishioners.
2. Stagecoach state the new timetable reflects a new contract with Hampshire County Council, which begs the question why weren't the Parish Council and our wider community consulted or notified well in advance. These changes are being introduced at short notice and will have a significant detrimental effect on the daily lives of many as they attempt to go about their daily business, whether that be work, shopping, social or leisure.
3. As we understand it, the weekday No 7 service is being largely withdrawn from serving Littleton village (apart from three services into the city in the morning and four services later in the day returning from the city). It is being totally withdrawn from running through Harestock and onto Peter Symonds College. Because the only Littleton stop is Deane Down Drove, the No 7 isn't realistically a viable option for those who live further up Main Road toward the Running Horse or the church, especially if the return journey involves carrying heavy shopping. The timetable is also very unclear about what routes the No 7 will take for the services that serve Deane Down Drove and where they will stop. Similarly, given that two of these services will also serve Teg Down, it is unclear which bus stops at Weeke / Dean Lane Corner will be used.
4. We also note that the last weekday 17.50 bus will only run on Sparsholt College days. This adversely affects those who work in Winchester. We urge that this service also runs on non-college days to help those who commute by bus.
5. We note that the new route No 77 will not serve Littleton village.
6. We also understand that the existing No 16 service to and from Stockbridge will continue to serve Littleton village. The amended service will now replicate the route on the section of the

existing No 7 along Kennel Lane, through Harestock, onto Peter Symonds College and into the city, and similarly for the return journey. However, this will only provide 3 buses a day Mon-Sat, whereas the existing No 7 currently operates on an hourly basis through the parish.

- 7. The impact of this reduction is to reduce a service for Littleton (at Deane Down Drove corner) from 13 buses (combining routes 7 & 16) each weekday to 6, i.e. a more than 50% cut! The Saturday service will also see a reduction.**
- 8. For Harestock (March Hare) the service to and from the City via Bereweeke Avenue is reduced from 10 to 3 per day i.e. a cut of 70%!**
9. Such reductions in service will inevitably make it harder for residents to get about the city area at times largely suitable to themselves. For instance, the new routing of the No 16 service will have a major impact on the elderly and mobility-impaired folk who don't have access to a car and currently use the 09:27 No 16 service to shop in Aldi / Waitrose or visit the Friarsgate medical centre at Weeke. At the moment, they have a reasonable hour to do their shopping or see the doctor before catching a return bus to Littleton. This will no longer be possible.
10. With less frequent or in some cases no services, residents will face unnecessary difficulties in planning return journeys. When potential poor connections are added to a more inconvenient timetable, it will not be surprising if people turn their backs on using the bus. It will only take one or two bad experiences to lead users to change their habits. There is already strong concern that our elderly residents without the App or access to online timetables will be very confused. The new No 7/77 timetable containing all its route variations is already confusing many as it is.
11. Furthermore, the continued timetabling of the No. 16 bus to pass through Littleton a couple of minutes before 9.30 means that the elderly will continue to be hit by the recent raising of the threshold for use of the concessionary bus pass use in Littleton. Bus drivers have been told that passengers have to pay. The revised timetable perpetuates this situation. Given the No 16's limited service, why can't an exception be granted in this case, or perhaps more easily, why not amend the timetable so that this service runs, say, 5 minutes later through Littleton?
12. Additionally, it appears very little thought has been given to students and staff of either Henry Beaufort School or Peter Symonds College. The new timetables effectively dispose of any appropriate bus services that will make attending these establishments by public transport impossible. This will likely either add to parents 'doing the school run' or hinder students of Peter Symonds. Surely there must be scope to add-in appropriately timed services to link these facilities with Littleton and the surrounding area, rather than focussing on Sparsholt College alone?
13. We are also concerned that as a Council keen to initiate and support efforts to combat climate change, the service cuts will only encourage those with cars to use them and therefore undermine efforts to encourage the use of public transport as a means of mitigating climate change. Winchester City Council have been reducing the attractiveness of car parking in the

city, so making cuts to bus services at this time doesn't appear to embrace any joined-up thinking.

14. In summary, the changes to both the No 7 and No 16 services will have a big negative impact and make simple things like shopping, getting to and from school or visiting the doctor more difficult, if not impossible at times. It is pushing people to shop in town rather than more locally and involves potentially long waiting times for return services. It seems inevitable that car usage will increase, so adding to congestion, pollution and climate change.
15. The danger and fears are that the less frequent and more inconvenient the service becomes, the fewer people will use it; the fewer people who use it, the less frequent it becomes, and so it goes on in a perpetuating circle of decline leaving Littleton, especially, with the future prospect of eventually having hardly any bus services at all.
16. It would also be true and crucial to say that the more you remove an individual's independence, the more dependent they become, increasing the burden on social services, which in itself becomes self-defeating.
17. Even at this late stage, and on behalf of our parishioners, we urge Hampshire County Council and Stagecoach to reconsider these changes, so that a more co-ordinated service can be provided which also includes linking with our local educational establishments. Whilst we acknowledge a current tough financial climate, cutting bus services which are a lifeline for many without cars and diminish people's ability to go about their daily lives and make for a thriving community is clearly a step in the wrong direction.

We await your response with interest.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Tozer'.

Cllr David Tozer
(Vice Chair, Littleton & Harestock Parish Council)

Cc

Cllr Nick Adams-King, Leader of HCC

Cllr Lulu Bowerman, HCC Executive Member for Highways and Passenger Transport

Cllr Jan Warwick, HCC Deputy Leader and HCC member for Winchester Downlands

Stagecoach South Customer Services

Danny Chambers, MP

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