

## **Summary of responses to consultation on proposed closure of Woodlands Road Metrolink station in Manchester and Government reply**

### Introduction

On 9 December 2010 the Department for Transport (DfT) issued a public consultation on a proposal by the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPT), now Transport for Greater Manchester, to cease passenger services at Woodlands Road station on the Bury line of the Manchester Metrolink light rail system and open two new stations. Under the provisions of the Railways Act 2005, proposals to close stations and cease passenger services on light rail networks must be referred to DfT. The replies received and DfT's response are summarised below.

### Next steps

Following consideration of the replies, and having received confirmation from Transport for Greater Manchester that planning consent for the new station at Queens Road was granted on 27 February 2013 and that there is a timetable for its opening, Ministers are minded to allow the proposed closure to proceed. The closure is first subject to ratification by the Office for Rail Regulation, which is not automatic.

### Replies and response

1. Fifty one replies to the consultation were received from forty six individual members of the public. Forty two people were opposed to the closure, two people were in favour of the closure and two responses were non-committal.
2. Nineteen responses believe that there is a lack of alternative public transport on Woodlands Road.

#### *Response*

*The Government understands that there are existing bus routes from Cheetham Hill Rd and Hazelbottom Rd near Woodlands Road station. These run into Manchester city centre with journey times varying from 10 to 16 minutes.*

3. Thirteen responses believe that any alternative station is further away

#### *Response*

*The new station at Abraham Moss will be only 250 meters away from the existing station at Woodlands Road. Whilst some users will face a slightly longer walk, more people will benefit from the new stations being closer to where they live.*

4. Eighteen responses believe that elderly and disabled passengers would be unable to walk as far as Abraham Moss station and a further fourteen

responses believed that people are scared to walk along the alley way to Abraham Moss.

#### *Response*

*The Government believes that whilst some passengers who currently use Woodlands Road will be inconvenienced by having to travel a little further to access the Metrolink at Abraham Moss or Queens Road, more people will benefit from the new stations being closer to where they live. All passengers will benefit from the improved environment at these stations noting that the new stations are fully accessible, are well lit and have full CCTV coverage. In the case of the alley way to Abraham Moss, an additional passenger emergency call point and CCTV cameras are provided next to the stop entrance as recommended by the Crime Impact Statement submitted with TfGM's planning application. It will be for Manchester City Council to make sure that the routes to and from the new station are safe.*

5. Thirteen responses believe that the ungated level crossing at Abraham Moss will be dangerous as it will have to be used by children going to the adjacent school.

#### *Response*

*The Government believes that this is a matter for TfGM as operator of the Metrolink system who will need to ensure that the level crossing operates in a safe manner.*

6. Six responses believe that the closure will cause difficulties for the people of Cheetham Hill.

#### *Response*

*The Government believes that whilst some passengers living in the Cheetham Hill area who currently use Woodlands Road will be inconvenienced by having to travel a little further to access the Metrolink at Abraham Moss, others will benefit from the new stations being closer to where they live, particularly once Queens Road Station is opened.*

7. Nine responses were concerned about the value for money of Woodlands Road station being relocated to Abraham Moss.

#### *Response*

*The Government believes that retaining passenger services at Woodlands Road is poor value for money, given the low level of patronage, in view of the opening of the new station with better facilities just 250 metres away. Retaining services at Woodlands Road while also opening the new stops at Abraham Moss and Queens Road would result in an increase of 30 seconds in journey time for through passengers. Queens Road Station is to be built on the site of*

*an existing staff stop at which most services currently stop so this will not significantly affect the value for money of the proposal.*

8. Seven responses believe closing Woodlands Road Station will only give a minimal time saving.

*Response*

*The Government believes that retaining passenger services at Woodlands Road is poor value for money. In addition replacing Woodlands Road with Abraham Moss and Queens Road will provide a better spacing of stops south of Crumpsall.*

9. Seven responses believe there was a lack of publicity and community engagement. Also one response believed the usage of Woodlands Road was understated in reports, one response believed that GMPTE case for closing the station contained distortions and one response believed that Department's value for money statement based was on flawed information.

*Response*

*The Government believes that the consultation and the information on which it was based were reliable.*

10. Five responses argued that they had been led to believe the proposed closure would not happen until Abraham Moss and Queens Road stations had opened and a further six responses mentioned both stations.

*Response*

*The Government believes that whilst the consultation was based on a package that includes the opening of Queens Road and Abraham Moss, the direct replacement of Woodlands Road Station is Abraham Moss Station, with the closure of the former station being the subject of the formal closure procedures being consulted upon. It is acknowledged, as set out in TfGM's Appraisal document which was available for inspection at TfGM's offices, was available on TfGM's website or could be requested from them by e-mail, that Queens Road was likely to open at a later date. This did not have a significant impact on the conclusion of the appraisal; however, the Government has waited for TfGM to gain planning consent for the Queens Road station, which TfGM are now scheduled to open in September 2013, before allowing the closure application to be submitted to the ORR for ratification.*

**Accepted responses received before the official consultation.**

1. A further ten responses were received before the consultation from eight individual members of the public. Seven people were opposed to the closure and one respondent was non-committal. The Government's response to these is set out in the replies above.

2. Three responses believe that there is a lack of alternative public transport on Woodlands Road.

3. Four responses believe that any alternative station is further away

4. Five responses believe that elderly and disabled passengers would be unable to walk as far as Abraham Moss station and a further three responses believed that people are scared to walk along the alley way to Abraham Moss.

5. Five responses were concerned about the value for money of Woodlands Road station being relocated to Abraham Moss.

6. One response believed there was a lack of publicity and community engagement. Also one response believed that Department's value for money statement based was on flawed information.

7. One response argued that they had been led to believe the proposed closure would not happen until Abraham Moss and Queen's Road stations had opened and a further response mentioned both stations.