

Update Thursday 5 December 2024

Harold Wood and Upminster – proposed changes to bus routes 346, 347 and 497

Addendum to consultation report:

1. Executive Summary
2. Appendix A: Detailed Analysis of Comments & Our Response to Issues Raised

In January 2024 we published a consultation report and partial decision following a public consultation proposing changes to bus routes 346, 347 and 497 in the London Borough of Havering (LB Havering).

A decision has now been reached in relation to bus route 347 which was under review. We have decided to proceed to withdraw this route as originally proposed.

The last day of operation of route 347 is Friday 17 January 2025 and from Saturday 18 January 2025 the route will no longer run.

Comprehensive customer information will be issued before route 347 stops operating to ensure everyone is aware.

Background

Our proposals formed part of our ongoing review of the London bus network and were designed to provide direct bus links while simplifying the bus network. They also sought to take account of feedback from a previous local consultation held in 2021 related to requests for an extension of route 497 to create bus links between Harold Wood and Upminster.

Our proposals included that:

- **Route 346** – would be withdrawn and replaced in its entirety by the proposed extension to route 497
- **Route 497** – extended to run between Harold Hill and Upminster via Upminster Park Estate to create new and direct north-south bus journeys
- **Route 347** – would be withdrawn and replaced in part by the proposed extension to route 497



We received 869 responses to the consultation. Of these, 859 were from members of the public and 10 were from stakeholders. Additionally, a petition was received containing 25 signatures from the local community in opposition to the removal of bus route 347.

Following consultation, it was decided to proceed with a revised scheme as follows:

- **Route 346** – restructured to operate between Upminster Park Estate, Waycross Road, and Dagnam Park Square via Upminster and Harold Hill, operating at a higher frequency than that consulted upon with a new Sunday service introduced. The route would therefore operate every 20 minutes Monday-Sunday daytimes and evenings
- **Route 347** – would continue to operate under review
- **Route 497** – replaced in its entirety by the extended route 346 described above

Updated response to issues raised

The table below provides the updated response to the most common issues raised by respondents to the consultation in relation to route 347.

Issue	Response
Accessibility	
<p>If route 347 is withdrawn there is concern older people, and people with disabilities or other accessibility needs could not easily access other bus routes due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distance • topography • the poor condition of pavements 	<p>It is recognised the withdrawal of route 347 may negatively impact some people with disability, age and other accessibility needs exacerbating that impact.</p> <p>However, the number of people impacted is low and falling.</p> <p>There are two main geographical areas where passengers will be most impacted. The first is the Cathedrals Estate where the walk to an alternative bus route is potentially more than the desired 400 metres. The latest data showed that of the 19 bus trips to / from this area, approximately two thirds used the 347 in one direction only. The implication being that many of these passengers already use a different bus route for their return journey. This indicates that although the 347 is appreciated, passengers can access alternative routes when required.</p>

	<p>The other geographical location is Clay Tye Road. These passengers will still have access to Essex route 269 which operates six return journeys a day to Ockendon Station (for interchange with National Rail or route 370) in one direction and Brentwood (for interchange with the Elizabeth line or route 498) in the other.</p> <p>It is considered the resource allocated to the 347 can be better used elsewhere on the London bus network for the benefit of passengers, including those with accessibility issues.</p> <p>Examples of improvements relevant to the 347 are the extended route 346 covering a large section of the 347 route; and from 2 November 2024 the frequency improvement on route 370, connecting Ockendon, Upminster and Romford.</p> <p>The 370 now operates with five buses per hour Monday – Saturday daytimes, increased from four buses per hour. On Sundays and all evenings there are four buses per hour instead of two.</p> <p>Improvements to the walking environment to access alternative bus routes would be the responsibility of the highway authority.</p>
<p>Safety and personal security concerns related to having to walk further between home and bus services particularly after dark and in winter, and considering lack of policing and poorly lit walking routes</p>	<p>Route 347 operates four return journeys a day Mondays to Saturdays only, so is mostly a daytime service. However, it is acknowledged that safety and security will nevertheless be a concern for some passengers.</p> <p>As noted above, passenger trips to /from the Cathedrals Estate will require walking further to route 346 (or 248) bus stops. However, the 346 operates from early in the morning until late at night and at higher frequencies than was previously the case in the evening and with a Sunday service.</p> <p>Passengers on Clay Tye Road will still have access to Essex route 269. Interchange with route 370 to access Upminster or Romford has also been improved through a planned improvement to the 370 frequencies, including in the evenings.</p>

	<p>The 370 now operates with five buses per hour Monday – Saturday daytimes, increased from four buses per hour. On Sundays and all evenings there are four buses per hour instead of two.</p>
<p>The withdrawal of route 347 would create a one-mile gap to the nearest bus stop. Some parts of Upminster (Frank's Cottages, St Mary's Lane would lose public transport access)</p>	<p>For some people, the closest bus stops served by either London bus routes 346 or 370 would be up to one mile away. Approximately 90% of existing passenger demand on St Mary's Lane and Clay Tye Road is within 600 metres of the bus network and 60% of the demand is within 400 metres.</p> <p>However, Essex bus route 269 serves Clay Tye Road meaning residents will still have access to public transport.</p> <p>We wish to withdraw this section of the London bus network due to very low passenger numbers. This will allow us to better utilise our resources. Examples include the recent extension of the 346 and introduction of a Sunday service and the planned frequency improvements on route 370.</p> <p>These enhancements will go a long way to mitigating the impact of the withdrawal on existing 347 passengers.</p>

Alternative routes and route suggestions – 347	
<p>Alternative routes as suggested in the Equalities Impact Assessment document were not considered to be suitable replacements for route 347. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternative bus stops were too far away and would deter people from using them • some bus stops were not suitable due to a lack of seating, lack of shelter and a lack of bus arrival time information 	<p>It is acknowledged that the withdrawal of the 347 may negatively impact some passengers requiring a longer walk. Most of the alternative bus stops do not contain a shelter. Providing a shelter will be difficult given the nature of their location.</p> <p>However, route 347 operates four return journeys per day Mondays to Saturdays, whereas alternative bus routes such as the 346 and 370 operate from early in the morning until late at night, seven days a week.</p> <p>The extended route 346 now covers a large section of the 347 route; and on 2 November 2024 frequency on route 370, connecting Ockendon, Upminster and Romford, was enhanced.</p> <p>The 370 now operates with five buses per hour Monday – Saturday daytimes, increased from four buses per hour. On Sundays and all evenings there are four buses per hour instead of two</p> <p>It is considered this represents an improvement in the overall transport offer.</p>
<p>The following suggestions were made as alternative proposals for bus route 347:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retain route 347, improve its service and allow it to loop around Moor Lane • retain route 347 and extend to serve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dagnam Park Square - Hornchurch - Queen's Hospital - Lakeside 	<p>Retaining route 347 would not be value for money as passenger usage is very low and much of the route is covered by higher frequency alternatives. Retaining route 347 as it currently operates would require a subsidy of equivalent to £10 per trip compared to an average subsidy of 39p across the TfL bus network.</p> <p>Extending the 347 would increase the operating cost of the route making it even less value for money. However, we will continue to keep the bus network under review.</p>

Alternative routes and route suggestions – 497	
Allow route 497 to serve more of the 347 route such as Cathedrals Estate, St Mary's Lane and Clay Tye Road	Route 497 is now the 346. Amending the routing of the extended 346 to serve the Cathedrals Estate, St Mary's Lane and Clay Tye Road, would significantly increase operating costs and would not be value for money.
Bus capacity and reliability	
The removal of bus routes was considered as detrimental to the community and the proposals required further thinking	<p>We aim to encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport wherever possible and within the budget available. Our plans for the 346 / 497 aimed to simplify the bus network and improve connectivity in LB Havering, particularly between Upminster and Harold Wood.</p> <p>These proposals were revised to consider responses from the consultation.</p> <p>Although withdrawing the 347 may negatively impact some, it allows us to adjust other routes to ensure services are operating in areas where our customers need them most. These adjustments have included improvements to route 346 and a more frequent route 370.</p>
Concern that local bus routes are already too busy/ particularly at school travel times, and this would worsen if bus routes were removed	<p>Route 347 operates four return journeys per day. It therefore offers little additional resource at school times as indicated by passenger usage.</p> <p>We are confident the withdrawal of route 347 will not impact capacity on other routes. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor the bus network to ensure service provision matches peak demand.</p>

Hail and Ride	
There was concern about the potential loss of the Hail and Ride sections of both bus routes 346 and 347. If this facility was not available between Lexington Way and Moor Lane bus users may feel isolated and not able to access bus services in the future	<p>None of the existing Hail and Ride sections will be withdrawn as part of this proposal.</p> <p>However, we are interested in discussing with LB Havering whether there is the opportunity to provide more fixed stops as they are more accessible, provide reassurance to passengers that they are on a bus route, and would make it possible to provide shelters and information.</p>
General issues with the proposals	
The proposals in Havering were considered as badly timed. With the expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to the area in August 2023, local bus routes would be needed more, and bus services should be increased not reduced	<p>We consider that, taken with the wider 346 and 497 scheme, plus the frequency increases on route 370, that overall, this represents an improved bus service. There is 3% more service in LB Havering than in 2019.</p> <p>Examples include seven days of operation on route 346 rather than six; higher evening frequencies on route 346; more direct travel opportunities on route 346 (which covers sections of the 347) and improved frequencies on route 370 on all days of the week as described earlier.</p>
Proposals for the removal of bus routes would make it inconvenient to access local town centres by bus, with a knock-on effect to town centre economies and vitality (such as Romford and Upminster)	As noted above, the withdrawal of the 347 may impact passenger travel. However, we consider the overall bus offer to be improving, including for access to local town centres.

Concern the proposals may lead to more car use in the area, and increased congestion and pollution as a result	<p>We aim to encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport wherever possible.</p> <p>Our proposals sought to simplify the bus network and improve connectivity in LB Havering particularly between Upminster and Harold Wood where we now contract for 50 buses per day instead of just four per day. By providing an attractive public transport offer we can contribute to reducing car usage, congestion, and pollution. We do not expect the changes to increase anti-social behaviour.</p>
Disappointment the proposals did not represent the promised investment in outer London bus services, and were a money saving exercise	<p>We consider that the scheme overall provides an improved bus offer to passengers and represents a significant investment in local services. There are now 50 buses per day between Upminster and Harold Wood, rather than just four per day. LB Havering as a whole has 3% more service volume than in 2019.</p>
Disappointment the proposals would not support new homes being built in Havering	<p>However, we will continue to keep the bus network under review to ensure we are meeting the needs of our passengers.</p>
Proposals had not considered that many people on the Cathedrals Estate rely on bus routes 346 and 347, and journeys would be impacted if the routes no longer ran	<p>It is recognised that people on the Cathedrals Estate are more impacted by the proposals consulted upon.</p> <p>However, route 346 now offers passengers a 20-minute bus service every day to Upminster, Harold Wood and Harold Hill. This includes Sundays where there is currently no service on route 347.</p>
Concern of the loss of or reduced access to public transport from key local destinations due to the removal of route 347	<p>It is acknowledged that the withdrawal of route 347 will reduce access to/from the Cathedrals Estate, St Mary's Lane, and Clay Tye Road.</p> <p>Bus journeys to / from these destinations is low. For example, the limited service on the 347 meant that the service started after school time began at James Oglethorpe Primary school.</p> <p>Those travelling to / from the Cathedrals Estate will still be within a reasonable walking distance of bus routes 346 and 248. Analysis of recent travel patterns suggest passengers already use routes</p>

	<p>346 and 248 for their return journey rather than wait for the 347.</p> <p>Those on Clay Tye Road will still have access to Essex route 269 providing connections to Ockendon where National Rail or bus route 370 provide access to Upminster and Romford.</p> <p>Alternatively, it provides access to Brentwood for shopping and other amenities as well as the Elizabeth line and route 498. These provide connections to Harold Wood, Gidea Park, Romford and Queen's Hospital.</p>
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