

The withdrawal of the Arriva 101 Service from Bus Stops at Cobtree Golf Course and Salisbury Road, Kits Coty

A report by the Head of Transport & Development to the Joint Transportation Board

Introduction & Background

1. On Monday 28 June Arriva withdrew their 101 bus service from serving two bus stops on the A229 at Cobtree Golf Course (A229 northbound) and opposite Salisbury Road, Kits Coty, (A229 southbound). Both withdrawals were on health and safety grounds. Arriva's action was prompted by a number of incident reports from their drivers which highlighted concerns over the location and layout of the stops.
2. This matter was reported to the Maidstone JTB meeting on 28 July (Item 13). The report identified the likely high cost of the engineering works to address Arriva's concerns at the bus stops in question and the fact that the KCC supported Service 150 could accommodate almost all of the limited number of passengers affected. Some 21 passengers per day were recorded alighting at the Cobtree Goff course stop.

Petition for the reinstatement of the 101 Service to the Cobtree Bus Stop area and options

3. A petition was also presented at the July Maidstone JTB. The petition, with some 170 names in support, included a detailed report calling for the reinstatement of the 101 Service to the Cobtree Golf Course Bus Stop. Subsequently, the JTB agreed that officers would investigate alternative solutions, including looking at the potential for modifying the Cobtree Golf Course junction some 300 metres north of the bus stop which may be a more cost effective solution, albeit with a longer walk for passengers.
4. Appendix 1 provides Members with a summary of the three options considered, together with their benefits and disadvantages. At some £44,000 the least costly option is to build a new bus stop/ lane across the mouth of the Cobtree Golf Course junction parallel with the A229 carriageway. This option would also cause least disruption to traffic on the A229 during construction. An outline design has been produced and Arriva have agreed, in principle, that the 101 service would resume serving the area once the scheme is completed. However, concerns remain over the safety of passengers walking the additional distance along the Golf Club access road which has neither a footway nor street lighting, over the loss of the junction direction sign reducing the conspicuousness of the junction and over stationary buses obscuring the visibility of traffic leaving the junction.

Conclusions

5. Members' views are welcome on the proposed scheme outlined above.

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Appendix 1

Cobtree Bus Stop Layby Improvement Options - A229 Northbound, Tyland Barn Bluebell Hill, Sandling, nr Maidstone

Further to the meeting of the Maidstone JTB in July, officers have been investigating in more detail options to create a stopping facility which would be suitable for Arriva to reintroduce the 101 bus service to the Cobtree Golf Course bus stop.

The report recommended that no action be taken because of the limited number of passengers using the service and the fact that the KCC supported service 150 can accommodate almost all of these passengers. However, if Members are minded to fund improvements, then there are three methods by which an improved northbound bus-stop layby could be introduced. In order of decreasing benefits to passengers these are:

Option 1: Lengthen the existing bus layby to 170metres by extending it northwards (likely to be in excess of £100K).

- Benefits:
- a) passengers would need to walk no further to reach their bus.
 - b) passengers' route to the bus stop would continue to be a lit footway
- Drawbacks:
- a) because the ground slopes away sharply in this vicinity, a full topographical survey (c.£2,800) is required to assess whether this option is even possible let alone affordable.
 - b) construction costs cannot yet be reliably estimated; the western verge of Bluebell Hill is known to have extensive underground services, the diversion/protection of which may make this scheme unaffordable. This could only be ascertained with an outline design estimated to cost £4,000 to prepare.
 - c) land ownership boundaries are unclear and need to be researched
 - d) even if construction were restricted to nights only, the works would have a very significant impact on traffic flows on Bluebell Hill for approximately three weeks.
 - e) there is no assurance that Arriva would agree to reintroduce the 101 service as this would not address one of the key safety concerns raised by their bus drivers (decelerating across an acceleration lane).

Option 2: build a new bus-stop in a new bus lane parallel with the A229 carriageway across the grass island at the mouth of the junction (likely to be in the region of £44K). See example below.

- Benefits:
- a) almost certainly buildable (subject to road safety audit approval, see below).
 - b) construction would have the least disruption to traffic on Bluebell Hill.
- Drawbacks:
- a) passengers would have to walk an additional 300metres to reach the bus stop and would have to walk along the Golf Club access road which has neither a footway nor street lighting. This would be a safety audit concern.
 - b) the bus lane would mean the removal of the junction direction sign on the grass island, which would be a safety audit concern.
 - c) the bus lane would have to give-way to traffic leaving Cobtree Golf Course. A bus waiting at this give way would partially obscure the visibility of drivers trying to merge with traffic on Bluebell Hill having left the Golf Course. This would be a safety audit concern.

Bus Stop arrangement on A2 at Black Prince Interchange, Bexleyheath



Option 3: build a new bus-stop layby at start of the acceleration lane from Cobtree Golf Course together with a bus-lane across the grass island at mouth of junction (likely to be in the region of £80K).

Benefits: a) almost certainly buildable (although a survey of statutory undertakers' plant would be needed to be sure)

Drawbacks: a) the road's alignment is such that a bus driver wishing to pull-out from the bus stop into the acceleration lane would be unable to see any vehicles leaving the Cobtree Golf Course that are about to pass. This would be a safety audit concern.

b) the bus lane would have to be signed to give-way to traffic leaving Cobtree Golf Course. A bus waiting at this give way would partially obscure the visibility of the drivers leaving Cobtree, trying to merge with traffic on Bluebell Hill (although the long acceleration lane significantly reduces the significance of this problem)

c) passengers would have to walk an additional 300metres to reach the bus stop and would have to walk along the Golf Club access road which has neither a footway nor street lighting. This would be a safety audit concern.

To progress any of the above the local County Members would need to commit £1k for outline design from the Member Highway Fund.

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