
Tonbridge High Street Review – Bus Stop G options

To: Tonbridge Joint Transportation Board, 11th June 2018

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Classification: Unrestricted

Following public consultation on the High Street Improvement scheme of 2016, subject of a separate report, this report outlines the options currently under consideration to address congestion issues around Bus Stop G (outside No. 34 High Street - Café Nero).

This report is for information only.

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 In 2016 Kent County Council completed a £2.7m improvement scheme in the High Street as part of the Tonbridge regeneration plan.
- 1.2 Kent County Council have recently undertaken post-scheme consultation which highlighted a number of concerns regarding congestion that specifically relate to Bus Stop G.
- 1.3 The nature of these concerns is that the reduced carriageway width means buses accessing the stop block the road and vehicles are unable to overtake while the bus is boarding and alighting. Bus Stop G is used by numerous services and often the bus is standing for some time. If more than one bus arrives at this stop this further complicates issues, causing more congestion. It should be noted that bus timetable punctuality is much improved on routes where the stops are 'online' and not held back in lay-bys although there is some driver frustration experienced by private car users.
- 1.4 At the request of the local County Members and Member of Parliament, Kent County Council have looked at the issues surrounding Bus Stop G, and the local environment. KCC have formulated a list of options aimed at addressing the issues on this part of High Street.

2.0 Options

2.1 The list of options currently under consideration by KCC

1	Making no changes
2	Provision of a full width lay-by for bus stop use
3/3a	Provision of a half width lay-by for bus stop use/provision of a 2/3rds width layby for bus stop use
4	Moving some bus services, that currently use Stop G, to another location
5	Reducing the footway width on one or both sides of High Street to provide a sufficient width to allow vehicles to pass
6	Making High Street one way from the junction of Vale Road to Medway Wharf Road. Southbound traffic (except taxis, buses and emergency vehicles) would be diverted via Sovereign Way and Avenue Du Puy
7	Remove Bus Stop G and utilise other existing stops

3.0 Further detail relating to each option

3.1 The below details the 'Positives' and 'Negatives' of each option, along with an estimation of the associated costs for implementing each option. These costs are purely a "high level" estimation and do not include costs such as potential utility diversion costs or additional Traffic Management requirements that could not be foreseen at this time.

1	<p>Making no changes</p> <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May encourage drivers to look for alternative routes through Tonbridge <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued issues regarding congestion through this part of High Street • Continued restrictions on traffic flow capacity for northbound vehicles • Concerns regarding lower air-quality through this part of High Street • Reputational damage to KCC <p><u>Costs involved: None</u></p>
2	<p>Full width lay-by (considered not viable)</p> <p>This option would involve the provision of a full width lay-by for bus stop use. KCC would be looking to utilise one of the loading bays, along the western footway of High Street, such as that outside No. 32 High Street</p>

	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles do not have to queue to overtake the waiting bus • Reduced overall congestion through this part of the High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes delay to bus operations as the bus moves fully out of the line of traffic. When the bus wants to move off and rejoin the carriageway it has to wait for an opportunity to do so. • Requires a lay-by length of 31 m and width of 3 metres. This would reduce the available footway width from 4.7m to 1.7m/1.8m. • This would require a raised kerb, for bus access purposes, which means there would be insufficient footway cross fall leading to water pooling and running back to the shopfronts • West footway for a significant length would have to be relayed to new levels with drainage alterations. • There is insufficient room for a bus shelter • Loss of loading / unloading capacity for local businesses • Requires utility diversions which may prove costly • Extension of layby and reconstruction of existing footway to accommodate buses • Can only accommodate 1 bus at a time <p>For the above reasons this option is not considered viable at this location</p> <p>A plan depicting how this option would look is attached as Appendix A.</p>
3	<p>Half width lay-by – bus half on lay-by and half on carriageway</p> <p>This option would involve the provision of a half width lay-by for bus stop use. Again, KCC would be looking to utilise one of the loading bays, along the western footway of High Street, such as that outside No. 32 High Street</p> <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the bus presence in the carriageway would allow some northbound vehicles to overtake a bus at Stop G. The overall carriageway width available would be 5.5 metres. This allows for two standard size cars to be able to pass each other on this part of High Street. Northbound vehicles encountering anything larger may have to wait for it to pass before attempting to overtake the waiting bus • Reduced overall congestion through this part of High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street

	<p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would require a raised kerb, for bus access purposes, which means there would be insufficient footway cross fall leading to water pooling and potentially running back to the shopfronts • There is insufficient room for a bus shelter • Alteration to and loss of available footway width on both footways. West side from 4.7m to 3.5m and East side from 3.3m to 2.0m (footway width varies). • Both footways for a significant length would have to be relayed to new levels with drainage alterations. • Loss of loading / unloading capacity for local businesses • Requires significant utility diversions on the opposite footway which will prove costly • Poor level and alignment of kerb/carriageway/footway, localised ramping of the footway to accommodate level changes • Extension of layby and reconstruction of existing footway to accommodate buses • Can accommodate only 1 bus at a time <p><u>Estimated costs involved</u></p> <p>£100,000 + Utility diversions (costs unknown)</p> <p>A plan depicting how this option would look is attached as Appendix B</p>
3a	<p>2/3rds width lay-by - bus 2/3rds on lay-by and 1/3rd on carriageway</p> <p>This option would involve the majority of the bus stop being on the existing footway with 1.0m being on the existing carriageway. Again, KCC would be looking to utilise one of the loading bays, along the western footway of High Street, such as that outside No. 32 High Street</p> <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the bus presence in the carriageway would allow some northbound vehicles to overtake a bus at Stop G. The overall carriageway width available would be 5.5 metres. This allows for two standard size cars to be able to pass each other on this part of High Street. Northbound vehicles encountering anything larger may have to wait for it to pass before attempting to overtake the waiting bus • Reduced overall congestion through this part of High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would require a raised kerb, for bus access purposes, which

	<p>means there would be insufficient footway cross fall leading to water pooling and potentially running back to the shopfronts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient room for a bus shelter • Loss of available footway width on West side from 4.8m to 2.8m. • A significant length of the footway would have to be relayed to new levels with drainage alterations. • Loss of loading / unloading capacity for local businesses • localised ramping of the footway to accommodate level changes • Extension of layby and reconstruction of existing footway to accommodate buses • Can accommodate only 1 bus at a time <p><u>Estimated costs involved:</u></p> <p>£65,000 + Utility diversions (costs not known)</p> <p>A plan depicting how this option would look is attached as Appendix B1</p>
4	<p>Splitting services</p> <p>This option would involve moving some services, that currently use Stop G, to another location in order to reduce congestion around Stop G. These services could either be moved to another existing stop (such as the castle) or to a newly created stop elsewhere on the western side of High Street.</p> <p>The provision of an additional bus stop could be provided in one of two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an on-carriageway bus stop, as per the existing Bus Stop G • a half width or 2/3rds width lay-by stop <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of buses using Stop G, leading to a reduction in congestion on this part of the High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive to the local bus services and their time tables • Bus users may have to travel further to their nearest bus stop • Potential loss of a further loading / unloading capacity for local businesses • May not be opportunities to overtake any buses at bus stop G • Additional bus shelter required if on carriageway bus stop provided • No bus shelters if half or 2/3rds width lay-by stops <p><u>Estimated costs involved</u></p> <p>£20,000 (on carriageway) to £200,000/£130,000 (half width/ or 2/3rds width)</p>

	+ Utility diversions (costs not known)
5	<p>Carriageway widening</p> <p>This option would involve reducing the footway width on one, or both, sides of High Street in order to provide greater carriageway width for traffic passing waiting buses</p> <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the overall carriageway width would allow some northbound vehicles to overtake a bus at Stop G. The overall width available would mean that only two standard size cars would be able to pass each other on this part of High Street. Northbound vehicles encountering anything larger would have to wait for it to pass before attempting to overtake the waiting bus • Reduced overall congestion through this part of High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposite Stop G there are two BT utility pits close to the kerb line (eastern side of High Street) leading to potentially high utility diversionary costs if this footway were to be narrowed • Would effectively reverse some of the benefits gained through the regeneration scheme • Poor kerb and footway alignment <p><u>Costs involved</u></p> <p>£200,000 + Utility diversion costs</p>
6	<p>No entry to southbound traffic</p> <p>This option would involve a no entry, at Medway Wharf Road, for all southbound motor vehicles (except taxis, buses and emergency vehicles). This would be coupled with the below traffic movement restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No left turn from Medway Wharf Road into High Street • No right turn from Lambert's Yard into High Street • No right turn from New Wharf Road into High Street <p>The result would be effectively making High Street one way, for all northbound vehicles, from the junction of Vale Road to Medway Wharf Road. This would greatly increase the opportunities for northbound traffic to pass buses waiting at Stop G.</p> <p>Southbound traffic (except taxis, buses and emergency vehicles) would be diverted via Sovereign Way and Avenue Du Puy</p>

	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may reduce congestion through this part of High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Potential improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased congestion through the diversion route • Additional journey times through creating a 'one-way' system • Reduced traffic capacity, in both directions, on the diversion route • Reductions in the air quality on the diversion route • Traffic heading south to enter Bradford Street would have to use the diversion route • Medway Wharf Road junction is not a large junction with poor visibility and may need a formal pedestrian crossing set back from the junction. • Unidentified traffic impacts on local road network <p><u>Costs involved</u></p> <p>£30,000 + potential additional costs to the diversion route</p> <p>A plan depicting how this option would look is attached as Appendix C</p>
7	<p>Remove Bus Stop G</p> <p>This option would involve the complete removal of Bus Stop G, and it's shelter, with no further provision made for buses and their users.</p> <p><u>Positive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may reduce overall congestion through this part of High Street • Increased traffic capacity for northbound vehicles • Improvements in air-quality through this part of High Street <p><u>Negative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive to the local bus services and their time tables • Bus users will have to travel a longer distance to the nearest bus stop • Not supported by bus operators or users • Puts extra demand on other bus stops <p><u>Costs involved</u></p> <p>£5,000</p>

4.0 Consultation with local bus operators

4.1 On 8th May 2018 Kent County Council started consulting with the local bus service providers (Arriva, Autocar, Go-coach and Nu-venture) on options 1 to 6 inclusive. Option 7 is a new addition to this list of options.

4.2 To date we have received two responses

4.2.1 Nu Venture Coaches would not favour any layby stops as it makes it more difficult to re-enter the carriageway. They would not want to see bus stop G removed and favour retaining the existing arrangement.

4.2.2 Autocar agree with Nu-Venture’s response generally but could accept a stop very nearby Stop G. They went on to say that any lay-by provision for buses should accommodate 2 buses and that they would support a partial one-way system if it were proposed.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Kent County Council are going to further examine the viability of the aforementioned options with the intention of presenting a further report, to this Board. This report will contain KCC’s recommendations for the Board’s consideration.

5.2 This exercise will involve more in-depth consultation with local bus service providers.

5.3 Funding for any changes is still to be agreed.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Plan depicting full width lay-by

Appendix B – Plan depicting half width lay-by

Appendix B1 – Plan depicting 2/3rds width lay-by

Appendix C – Plan depicting diversion route for no entry option