

Brighton Area Buswatch



We are a branch of Bus Users, the national charity representing bus passengers

Buswatch News – February 2021

Consultation on transport changes: What it could mean for bus users

Brighton & Hove City Council has launched a consultation on measures which are designed to encourage active travel, primarily walking and cycling. This edition of Buswatch News concentrates on those plans. The consultation is open until 14 March and covers four areas:

- Western Road - Montpelier Road/Waitrose to the Clock Tower junction
- A23 Preston Circus to Patcham roundabout
- A270 Old Shoreham Road – The Drive, Applesham Way
- A259 seafront - West Street to Hove Lagoon, Glendor Road

Brighton & Hove City Council has received Government funding for these improvements.

Western Road and the Clock Tower junction. The main proposals here are to improve the environment for pedestrians with resurfacing and improved pedestrian crossings. Details are rather vague but we have been assured there are no plans to restrict buses from using Western Road. The recent pavement widening outside Waitrose would remain and the road could be widened to allow two way traffic by the H&M store. Concerns have been expressed about the poor and cramped waiting facilities at the bus stops outside M&S. We also suggested the top of Preston Street could be closed to traffic. This would reduce the number of cars using Western Road to turn right into Montpelier Road which creates congestion at the bus stop opposite Waitrose where the pavement and bus waiting areas are very narrow and there is no shelter.

Proposals for the clock tower junction are not detailed in the consultation. There needs to be an improved bus flow for westbound buses to avoid long queues which have led to this junction having the highest emission levels in the city. This as the most urgent issue to be tackled. It was first raised with the Council three years ago but nothing has happened.

A23 Preston Circus to Patcham roundabout. The main proposals here involve better cycle lanes: the existing cycle lane on Preston Road between Argyle Road and Preston Park would be upgraded and separated from the pavement; the southbound cycle lane between Preston Drive would be relocated to the existing path on the west side of Preston Park and pedestrian crossings would be upgraded. There are also plans for improved cycle lane facilities between Preston Road and Patcham roundabout. We are told bus stops and bus lanes would remain and have expressed concerns about bus stops in front of cycle lanes as in Old Shoreham Road. The Council has confirmed that 'floating bus stops' where cycle lanes go behind bus stops (as in Lewes Road) would be used where there is space. New bus lanes north of Preston Drive are welcome but we have concerns about how separate bus lanes, cycle lanes and general traffic lanes can all be accommodated.

A259 seafront West Street to Hove Lagoon. The Council's long term ambition for the A259 is to have a two-way protected cycle lane on the south side of the road between Brighton and Shoreham. This would need support from West Sussex County Council beyond Portslade. Current proposals are that the existing temporary cycle lane on the westbound carriageway would remain and it would be extended from Fourth Avenue to Glendor Road. To enable this to happen, one westbound A259 traffic lane would be removed. Eastbound cyclists would continue to use the cycle lane on the pavement. Most bus stops would remain in place except the westbound Langdale Gardens stop which would either be relocated or suspended. Thankfully there are no plans to reinstate the on-road cycle lane between West Street and the Palace Pier/Marine Parade which created huge problems last summer.

A270 Old Shoreham Road – The Drive to Applesham Way. The proposals here are the most controversial as they involve reducing road space for general traffic, including buses, by removing one lane in each direction to create cycle lanes on both sides of the road. Buswatch has serious concerns about the impact of extending these cycle lanes on bus services. The existing 'temporary' cycle lanes from The Drive to Hangleton Road introduced in May 2020 would remain, with some changes.

- There would be more space for vehicles turning right from Old Shoreham Road to Olive Road. However, this means banning the right turn from Old Shoreham Road into Stapley Road which is used by bus route 47.
- The right turn from Stapley Road into Old Shoreham Road used by bus route 16 would also be banned. In both cases there are exemptions for cyclists so buses should also be exempt from the ban. Without these turns it would be very difficult for buses to serve the Knoll Estate, an area containing mostly social housing. The 16 & 47 each run hourly so exemptions should not create a problem and both routes are funded by the Council.
- Displaced traffic from Stapley Road is likely to use Old Shoreham Road and Hangleton Road leading to increased congestion at that junction. Queues here can already stretch back along Old Shoreham Road to Olive Road at peak times, delaying buses on route 2.

- The reduced road space in Old Shoreham Road would inevitably lead to more delays for buses on routes 2, 6 & 46 west of Boundary Road and possibly routes 1 & 1A at Locks Hill. It would be more difficult for route 6 buses to turn right into Foredown Drive (and for buses towards Brighton to turn left).
- Increased delays are also likely to impact on routes 5, 5A & 5B in Sackville Road and route 5B in Nevill Road, where new cycle lanes are also proposed and congestion is already an issue.

Government statistics show that during the first lockdown there was a huge increase in cycle usage nationally. The [latest figures](#) show a different picture with current weekday cycle usage much lower than the same time last year, just before Lockdown. What is clear is that cycling levels depend on the weather; last spring was predominantly dry and warm while January 2021 was the coldest month for ten years. Hence a predicted move towards more all year round cycling has not occurred, based on national statistics anyway.

Buswatch supports the principle of improved cycle lanes but not if they are placed where they would have a detrimental effect on bus users. Combined bus and cycle lanes are not being considered. The City Council says it is committed towards improving public transport as well as encouraging active travel options. However, if the Council is to win public support it will need to prove that these facilities will be well used. The seafront is an obvious attraction for cyclists and pedestrians throughout the year, but the environment along Old Shoreham Road is quite different. Many will question whether it is appropriate for cycle only facilities to take up so much space in this road. A number of residents and local Councillors have already voiced strong objections.

We recommend bus users respond to the [consultation](#), closing date 14 March.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

In normal circumstances, meetings with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council are held four times a year. Meetings will resume when restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, please send in your comments and we will take them up with the operators or the Council.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. Contributions and suggestions are welcome.

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