

LOCAL COMMITTEE (SURREY HEATH)

DATE: Thursday 21st October 2021

LEAD OFFICER: Ian Murdoch, Senior Transport Officer

SUBJECT: Bus Stop Clearways in Surrey Heath

DIVISIONS:

Camberley East,
Camberley West,
Heatherside and Parkside,
Frimley Green and Mytchett,
Bagshot, Windlesham and Chobham,
Lightwater, West End and Bisley

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Surrey County Council (SCC) proposes to implement new / upgraded bus stop clearways at bus stops along several key bus routes in Surrey Heath, namely bus routes 1, 2, 3, 11 and 34/35, which are the core bus routes operating in Surrey Heath. They take many thousands of residents to work, school and medical appointments, providing access to a huge range of services each and every day. They are vital in supporting the economy of the borough in a sustainable way.

This is part of a package of measures funded by the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3 LEP), aimed at increasing the accessibility of bus services and encouraging wider use of public transport by residents.

Clearways are required to ensure that buses can access the bus stop waiting area to ensure step-free access onto/off buses and to aid bus service reliability.

The increased accessibility of bus services is a legal requirement incumbent upon SCC, as outlined in Section 1 below, with the Council having to provide infrastructure based on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, the Department for Transport's (DfT) Inclusive Transport Strategy and National Bus Strategy ("Bus Back Better"), as well as the SCC's own Climate Change Strategy. These place a clear responsibility on SCC to enable greater accessibility of bus services for all residents, including the elderly and mobility impaired.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Surrey Heath) is asked to agree that:

- (i) new / upgraded bus stop clearways throughout Surrey Heath (as shown in the Annexes to this report) are approved.

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(ii) following the approval of the clearways, SCC officers write to adjacent residents and businesses to advise that the bus stop clearways have been approved by the Local Committee, and will therefore be able to be enforced.

(iii) any objections from adjacent residents and businesses can be addressed by delegated authority by the Local Highways Manager, or other appropriate role within the Scheme of delegation, and the Chair of the Local Committee.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Surrey Heath Local Committee agree to the bus stop clearways at bus stops throughout Surrey Heath (as outlined in the Annexes), to operate for 24 hours a day, Monday to Sunday. This is to ensure that all buses servicing these bus stops are able to provide passengers with step-free access at all times and ensure that there is good visibility for the bus driver to see waiting passengers as well as aiding journey time reliability. This aims to support residents to use public transport across the borough and to make the public transport offer more attractive by making it more reliable.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 Since January 2016, all full-size single deck buses have been made fully accessible, as per the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR). This makes it easier for passengers with mobility issues to board and alight buses. Non-compliance with PSVAR is a criminal offence, contrary to Section 40(3) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 1.2 In July 2018, the Department for Transport (DfT) subsequently released 'The Inclusive Transport Strategy: achieving equal access for disabled people' policy, which aims to create an all-inclusive transport network for everyone by 2030 and contribute to getting an additional one million disabled people into work by 2027. Therefore, there is a requirement for public transport infrastructure, including bus stops, to be accessible to all.
- 1.3 SCC's Greener Futures Programme has followed the declaration of a Climate Emergency in Surrey in 2019, with improvements to sustainable transport modes such as public transport, walking and cycling being part of the resultant Climate Change Strategy.
- 1.4 The Department of Transport's "Bus Back Better" National Bus Strategy was published in March 2021. It sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England and to improve equality of opportunity, particular for older and disabled people.
- 1.5 With the above in mind, it is important that buses are able to access stops to provide step-free access for all passengers ensuring that they are able to safely board and alight, especially those with mobility issues, wheelchair users, those with child buggies, or those using shopping trolleys. Where there is unrestricted parking, buses can be prevented from pulling in parallel to the kerb meaning that passengers have to step into the road to access the bus. It is also difficult to deploy bus ramping or kneeling equipment.

- 1.6 Installing a bus stop clearway, with an enforceable marked yellow bus stop cage, prevents vehicles parking on the carriageway at bus stops and allows buses to safely and effectively serve these stops.
- 1.7 Bus stop clearways enable Borough enforcement officers to issue penalty charge notices on offending vehicles thereby discouraging inconsiderate parking.
- 1.8 Reliability of buses is also improved if the bus is able to approach, stop and depart from bus stops without hindrance, improving the accuracy of scheduled bus stopping times and encouraging the usage of sustainable transport. This is a key issue raised by residents, who tell us they would use the bus if it operated to time.
- 1.9 In recent months the Council has been progressing a number of accessibility improvements (improved footways and kerbing) at various bus stops in Surrey Heath, Guildford and Woking. These have been funded by the EM3 LEP, following the approval of business cases submitted by SCC in 2018.
- 1.10 In addition to the civils works being carried out at the bus stops, the proposed new bus stop clearway markings will make the bus stops even more accessible, for the reasons outlined above.
- 1.11 The majority of these bus stops already have yellow bus stop cages marked on the carriageway, but do not have clearway approval for them to be enforceable. The other bus stops (which currently do not have any markings) are located along the same bus corridors, and clearway approval is requested for the above reasons and for consistency in the area. In general, the proposed measures are mainly the formalisation of existing bus stop arrangements, and should not result in any significant impacts upon parking in the vicinity of these bus stops.
- 1.12 As the bus services along these routes operate every day from the early morning and into the late evening, the most appropriate clearway control is a 24hr continuous prohibition of stopping, loading or parking, by all vehicles other than local bus services. A shorter period of control would increase the risk of obstructive parking occurring during the late evening and early morning periods, however, the bus services do require unhindered access to/from the bus stops throughout the entirety of their operating schedules.
- 1.13 SCC's recommended bus stop clearway length is 23m. This is to enable buses to easily pull up to the kerbside, and easily pull away on departure from the bus stop, although different clearway lengths may be proposed at individual bus stops depending upon local conditions. Further details of the proposals for individual bus stops are shown in the Annexes to this report.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 A number of bus stops in Surrey Heath have been improved to allow residents in the locality to be able to benefit from more accessible bus stops, with raised accessible kerbing and footway improvements being provided at these bus stops.

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- 2.2 The bus stops where new bus stop clearways are proposed are located throughout Surrey Heath and are shown on the Annexes to this report. They are located on bus routes 1, 2, 3, 11 and 34/35.
- 2.3 Providing bus stop clearways will ensure that passengers who board/alight from the bus at the stops can do safely and with step-free access.
- 2.4 The operating hours of the proposed bus stop clearways would be 24 hours a day, Monday to Sunday to correspond with the operating hours of the bus services.
- 2.5 Although some of the bus stops are located in residential areas, these areas have adequate unrestricted parking, and the introduction of new / improved bus stop clearways should not result in any significant new parking pressures for local residents and businesses. In general, the proposed measures are mainly the formalisation of existing bus stop arrangements, and should not result in any significant impacts upon parking in the vicinity of these bus stops.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The option of doing nothing does not support the provision of accessible public transport, the sustainable transport and Greener Futures agendas or Surrey's Climate Change Strategy. Furthermore, as outlined in Section 1 above, there are legal and other legislative requirements that the Council is required to adhere to in respect of providing fully accessible bus stop infrastructure. Therefore, "doing nothing" is not recommended.
- 3.2 The preferred option is to install clearways at various bus stops throughout Surrey Heath, to be operational twenty-four hours a day, Monday to Sunday, to ensure that safe and convenient access to/from bus services is available to all passengers.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 Local bus operators have ongoing problems in being unable to access bus stops due to parked cars along bus corridors. This prevents buses from safely pulling in parallel to the kerb at bus stops, and also delays the bus service due to buses having to negotiate around vehicles.
- 4.2 If the proposed bus stop clearways are approved by the Local Committee, affected frontages and properties neighbouring the stops (residential properties and businesses) will then be informed of the proposals with the opportunity for feedback and comments on the proposed changes. Any objections from adjacent residents and businesses can be addressed by delegated authority by the Local Highways Manager, or other appropriate role within the Scheme of delegation, and the Chair of the Local Committee.
- 4.3 Surrey County Council, as the Highway Authority, has powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions 2016 to create bus stop clearways. A bus stop clearway is a parking restriction at a bus stop that can be enforced by the District Councils Civil Enforcement Officers as they would waiting restrictions. They are, however,

more onerous than waiting restrictions because the clearway also prohibits stopping and loading/unloading over the length of the bus stop.

- 4.4 Although as stated in 4.2 above, impacted residents and businesses will be advised if the proposed bus stop clearways are approved by the Local Committee, unlike waiting restrictions there is no mandatory statutory consultation process in order for a highway authority to implement a bus stop clearway. Consequently it is SCC's policy that these measures are approved by the Local Committee to ensure that there is some local consultation prior to their implementation.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The works will be funded by the EM3 LEP through the "Blackwater Valley Gold Grid" programme.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out at the time of the submission to the EM3 LEP for the overall Blackwater Valley Gold Grid programme, with part of this programme being the increased accessibility of bus stops throughout various key bus routes in Surrey Heath.
- 6.2 No Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed specifically for the proposed bus stop clearways, but the changes made to these bus stops in providing step-free access to buses serving this stop are to improve accessibility for all bus users, including those with disabilities and mobility issues. It is not envisaged that any protected characteristics will be disbenefitted by the proposals.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 The bus stops are located on bus routes 1, 2, 3, 11 and 34/35 which operate in Surrey Heath, within the following divisions:

- Camberley East
- Camberley West
- Heatherside and Parkside
- Frimley Green and Mytchett
- Bagshot, Windlesham and Chobham
- Lightwater, West End and Bisley

- 7.2 The proposed measures will assist in enabling more reliable bus services in these communities, which will be more accessible to more members of those communities. This will assist more people to lead a more independent life, as they can access bus services with more ease due to the increased accessibility of those services.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

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8.1

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Making local bus services more accessible will encourage wider use of these more sustainable modes of transport. With reduced car use, this will contribute towards reduced carbon emissions and overall environmental benefits.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	As the proposed measures are intended to benefit public transport and encourage its wider use, this can contribute towards a more sustainable lifestyle with increased walking to/from bus services. The reduced carbon emissions and overall environmental benefits will have clear benefits on public health.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 9.1 It is proposed to roll out a programme of new / improved bus stop clearways throughout Surrey Heath, on bus routes 1, 2, 3, 11 and 34/35. These will enable the bus stops to be kept clear from obstructive parking and enable buses to pull up fully to the kerbside, thus increasing the accessibility of bus services. This is intended to make the bus services accessible to a wider cross-section of the community and encourage wider use of public transport, which ties in SCC's policies of encouraging more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling.
- 9.2 This report requests that in order to progress this roll-out of enforceable bus stop clearways, the Local Committee approves the proposed measures. This will enable SCC officers to carry out subsequent notification of the proposals to residents and businesses who will be impacted by the proposed changes.

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10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 If the Local Committee gives approval to proceed with the bus stop clearways, SCC officers will make arrangements to notify local residents and businesses in the vicinity of the bus stops. There will be the opportunity for the affected parties to comment on the proposals, which will be considered under Delegated Authority by the Local Highways Manager, or other appropriate role within the Scheme of delegation, and the Chair of the Local Committee. A summary of any comments will be provided to the Local Committee.
- 10.2 Once any comments have been received and addressed, SCC officers will then programme the roll-out of the new / improved bus stop clearways, so that they become enforceable.
- 10.3 It is envisaged that due to the number of bus stops for which it is proposed to provide new / upgraded bus stop clearways, the initial stages of the implementation will concentrate on certain corridors within Surrey Heath (these corridors are to be confirmed), to enable their implementation to be progressed in stages.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

SCC Local Highways Team
SCC Parking Team
Bus Operators

Annexes:

(Once I have completed the updated Annexes, I will cross-reference these here)

Sources/background papers:

Business Case for the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid project

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