

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD
3 SEPTEMBER 2019
CABINET
5 SEPTEMBER 2019

CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO TFL BUS SERVICES 428 AND 492

Heath, West Hill, Town, Newton, Princes, Brent, Stone House and Stone Castle

1. Summary

1.1 This paper reports on the proposed changes to bus routes 428 and 492 currently subject to public consultation, identifies the impacts and recommended response to the consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Joint Transportation Board

2.1 That this report be considered and Cabinet advised accordingly.

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2.2 That the concerns highlighted in paragraphs 3.7 - 3.12, 3.16-17 and Appendix B to this report be the basis of a formal objection to TfL's consultation, in particular, to not support the proposed changes to bus route 492.

2.3 That officers continue to liaise with Transport for London, Kent County Council and non-TfL bus service operators beyond the consultation closing date of 10 September 2019 to seek a resolution that will alleviate the impact of proposed changes on customers in the Dartford area, in line with the identified mitigations sought, as set out under paragraph 3.19.

3 Background and Discussion

Transport for London's Proposal

3.1 Transport for London (TfL) are proposing changes to routes 428 and 492 from January 2020:

- Route 428 to no longer run between Crayford and Bluewater; single deck buses replaced by double deck buses, and three existing school day-only peak hour journeys between Erith and Crayford to no longer run;
- Route 492 to no longer run between Dartford centre and Bluewater
- Since 1 July 2019, routes 96, 428 and 492 towards Woolwich, Erith or Sidcup have no longer served bus stops in Market Street, Instone Road or Highfield Road. These TfL bus services have been relocated to Home Gardens (westbound), which brings them alongside the TfL eastbound bus routes on Home Gardens. These changes enable the implementation of the Market Street scheme which forms part of the wider works for the improvement of the town centre environment and traffic conditions and are an integral part of the regeneration

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aspirations and aims for Dartford Town Centre. KCC and TfL were advised of the scheme proposals and supported the changes. TfL are legally required to consult on any changes to bus routeing accordingly.

Consultation

- 3.2 TfL convened a formal consultation 'Have your say' in July 2019 which will close on 10 September 2019. **Appendix A** shows the consultation leaflet indicating the proposed changes to bus routes affected. The implications of these are explained under Local Context and Impacts below.
- 3.3 TfL are also seeking views on the proposed changes to routes 96, 428 and 492 in Dartford town centre.
- 3.4 TfL produced an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) report in July 2019 outlining the projected impact on bus passengers in terms of age groups, disability and pregnancy/maternity.
- 3.5 TfL has confirmed that it believes that bus route 96, which travels along Dartford Road between Crayford and Bluewater, should accommodate the extra demand as it runs 7.5 buses per hour and will be willing to review its frequency if necessary.
- 3.6 TfL has indicated that it has no statutory responsibility to operate to and from destinations in Kent as the area is outside Greater London. It is worth noting that the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy (MTS) identifies a key policy to support improvements to public transport to enhance travel between London and the rest of UK. In addition, the MTS has specific proposals to work with stakeholders to seek transport investment in the wider South East to support the realisation of any associated economic and housing growth potential.

Local Context and Impacts

- 3.7 The TfL proposals affect buses that run from Sidcup, Erith and Woolwich to Crayford and then across the Greater London/Kent boundary through the north western part of Dartford Borough to Dartford Town Centre and on to Bluewater. There are TfL bus routes that replicate parts of the 96, 428 and 492 routes on the London side. On the Dartford side, there are bus routes commissioned by Kent County Council that replicate the affected bus routes for part of their routes, specifically from Dartford Town Centre to Bluewater, along Watling Street. However, there are no Kent services that cover the north western part of the Borough, west of Dartford Town Centre. Whilst it is proposed that the 96 route will not be changed, the proposals will result in a reduction of connectivity between certain parts of LB Bexley including Erith and Sidcup and the north-west part of Dartford through to Bluewater and vice versa.

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- 3.8 The more specific impacts on journeys are considered below. More generally, with regard to public transport connections across this area, the distinct responsibilities of TfL and KCC are noted and the primary responsibility of both authorities to serve residents of their administrative areas. However, there are many reasons why residents from Dartford and Bexley travel across the administrative boundary to destinations on the other side of the border. With a tendency of both authorities to focus services within their own boundaries and terminate bus routes at trip attracting locations such as town centres, the residential area between Crayford and Dartford town centres, which has no major trip attractors, is currently poorly served. There are no KCC managed bus services covering this area and there is a reliance on the TfL bus routes which are now proposed to be changed.
- 3.9 Evidence shows that social and economic connections both ways between Dartford and Bexley are stronger than for other surrounding areas with regard to employment and migration. This means residents will be travelling from residential areas on either side of the boundary for work as well as for social/family visits. There are a number of employment areas along the bus routes on both sides of the boundary. London is dependent on a workforce from outside its area and Bexley is the top location for Dartford residents who travel to work outside of Dartford (12.3% of all Dartford residents in work). Flows in the other direction are equally strong, with 12.8% of Bexley residents travelling to take up jobs in Dartford.
- 3.10 Schools are another major reason for trips across the boundary for both staff and pupils, with 15 schools across the affected area. Actual figures on the cross boundary school travel are not currently available but anecdotally, it is apparent that there are large flows of school children both ways. The secondary schools will be particularly affected, with pupils travelling longer distances. The grammar schools, including Dartford Girls and Boys Grammar are known to have a strong draw from parts of Bexley. It is not yet known which areas the new 8-form entry secondary school at Stone, which is due to open in September 2019, will draw from but the likelihood is that it will be impacted by the loss of connectivity from areas that are currently served by the buses.
- 3.11 Whilst Bluewater is the main shopping draw in the impacted area and the 96 route will continue to serve it, the frequency of available services will be impacted on this route. Direct connections from Erith and Sidcup, however, will no longer be available. Other town centres along the routes, such as Dartford, Crayford, Erith and Sidcup will be affected by additional pressure on capacity and connectivity of services.
- 3.12 The bus routes affected by the proposals pass along the A207 (Dartford Rd) and A226 (Dartford Road, West Hill, Dartford Town Centre and East Hill). This is a major transport corridor link which connects Crayford (London Borough of Bexley) with Dartford Town Centre. The road carries

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high levels of traffic and experiences congestion during peak periods. Loss of connectivity and reduction in frequency of services may result in transfer from bus to car use, further exacerbating congestion issues on this route. Dartford Town Centre and the A226 / B255 St Clements junction are both within Air Quality Management Areas and increased congestion is likely to worsen conditions in these areas.

- 3.13 Bus route 96 travels from Woolwich to Bluewater, via Crayford Rd, Dartford Rd, West Hill, Dartford Town Centre, East Hill and Darent Valley Hospital. Between Dartford Town Centre and Bluewater, it only stops at Darent Valley Hospital. No changes are proposed to this service but it will need to accommodate passengers who currently use the other services which are proposed to be cut, so adequate capacity and frequency will be critical.
- 3.14 The 428 currently operates between Erith and Bluewater. From Crayford, it follows the same route as the route 96. It is proposed that this route is terminated at Crayford. From here, passengers will be expected to change on to the route 96 if they wish to travel to Dartford Town Centre and beyond and vice versa if they are travelling from Dartford and wish to travel beyond Crayford.
- 3.15 The 492 currently runs from Sidcup to Bluewater via Crayford town centre, Dartford Road, West Hill, Dartford Town Centre, East Hill, The Brent, London Road and St Clements Way to Bluewater. It is proposed to change the route from Crayford town centre to run along Station Rd, Chastilian Rd, Princes Rd, and Shepherds Lane and on to West Hill and Dartford Town Centre. It is proposed to terminate the service at this point so that it does not continue to Bluewater via The Brent, London Rd and St Clements Way.
- 3.16 The effect of these changes for those travelling by bus will include:
- Route 428: Those travelling between Erith and Dartford and vice versa will not be able to make a direct bus journey but will need to change at Crayford. This will affect pupils and teachers travelling to secondary schools (in particular) on route, such as the Dartford Boys and Girls Grammar School, and those travelling westbound to Woodside Academy and Trinity Church of England secondary Schools in Erith/Belvedere.
 - Route 492: Those travelling between Stone and Bluewater will no longer have a direct bus route to Bluewater and will have to interchange at The Brent near Shenley Road and walk for some considerable length to a non-TfL bus service making this relatively short journey unattractive by bus. Customers in London Road will not have direct access to any bus service going to Darent Valley Hospital.
 - Route 492: Those travelling to Stone from west of Dartford Town Centre, will no longer have a direct bus service and will need to interchange at Dartford Town Centre. This will particularly impact

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students and staff at the Stone Lodge secondary school which is due to open in September 2019, as well as players and spectators at the new rugby club opening shortly at the same location and the other sports facilities on the same site.

- There will be implications for customers in terms of cross-ticketing and poor bus connectivity due to lack of proximity between interchange bus stops, as well as waiting times. Additional costs may arise for customers due to lack of cross-ticketing between TfL and non-TfL bus services. This will be a significant issue for bus passengers living and visiting the area if not addressed.

3.17 Initial assessment of the proposed changes showed that the proposal will impact on Dartford area with the following concerns (see table showing initial assessment in **Appendix B** based on figures in the Equality Impact Assessment carried out by TfL in July 2019):

- Customers (including school pupils/staff, people with disability and the elderly) are likely to experience additional wait and journey times during the weekdays between Crayford and Bluewater;
- Customers using bus routes 492 in London Road are likely to be impacted the most as they will have no direct access to bus services which run east to Bluewater and west beyond Dartford Town Centre. TfL estimate that 1000 passengers per weekday would need to interchange of which 800 per weekday will be onto non-TfL bus routes and 200 to TfL routes. TfL state that 120 customers per weekday would experience frequency reductions. TfL have been asked to substantiate these figures, particularly the last figure, which appears to be low. This may influence their choice of transport or they may choose not to make the journey at all, if this is possible for them;
- Potential additional car journeys resulting from the increased inconvenience (e.g. parents driving children to school, or to sports meetings) will impact on a key policy area for DBC and KCC in terms of Air Quality Management Areas with potential for increased traffic congestion along London Road, Dartford Town Centre, East Hill and Watling Street.
- There is likely to be additional pressure on bus route 96 and non-TfL bus routes in the area with capacity implications.
- There is concern that schools have not been properly consulted on the proposed changes as no targeted engagement has been undertaken with schools in Dartford by TfL before the school break and they may not get sufficient opportunity to respond robustly before the consultation ends on the 10th September. Officers have engaged with TfL to rectify this and it appears that TfL may now be taking steps to correct this. However, concerns remain about the length of time schools will have to respond.
- Officers have also raised concerns that TfL has not engaged with the operators of non-TfL bus service to understand how any gaps resulting from the proposals can be addressed.

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3.18 In addition, concerns relating to impact on the community have been expressed by local residents through various media, such as Dartford Living (August 2019, Issue 158). In particular, impact on the most vulnerable customers, congestion and pollution. These were focussed on proposed changes to route 492 while others were about the proposed changes to 428.

Officer Engagement

3.19 TfL's formal consultation is due to close 10th September 2019. Officers are currently working closely with KCC - the relevant highway authority. Officers continue to engage with colleagues in TfL and Bexley Council (the neighbouring borough affected). The focus of officer's and KCC's discussion with TfL is exploring what mitigation measures could be considered to alleviate the impact on customers particularly for residents and visitors to the Borough. These are detailed in Appendix B, and summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1 – Summary of potential mitigation measures

Route 96	-Simplify interchange locations at Crayford so that passengers can make their connection at the same stop.
Route 428	-Provide additional stopping points in Watling Street between Dartford and Bluewater. -Increase the frequency of bus route 96.
Route 492	-TfL engage with Arriva to identify how the impact of the deletion of this route from Dartford Town Centre via Stone to Bluewater can be mitigated utilising non-TfL bus routes. -Increase the frequency of bus route 96.

3.20 Officers will continuing to engage with TfL and the other relevant authorities. A verbal update will be provided at JTB and Cabinet if there are any developments to report.

3.21 KCC has provided a formal statement confirming its position shown at **Appendix C**. Bexley is carrying out detailed analysis of the passenger data used by TfL in its [TfL's] EQIA report and will be setting out its position in due course. Dartford Council's work with Bexley will serve to identify common areas of concern.

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4 Relationship to the Corporate Plan

ET1. Reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in the Borough.

5 Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	None to this authority
Legal Implications	None
Public Sector Equality Duty	An EQIA has been undertaken by TfL to assess implications of the proposal on disadvantaged or vulnerable people. Discussions are ongoing to identify how the potential impacts will be mitigated, should the proposal be implemented.
Staffing Implications	None
Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	None

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

7. Appendices

Appendix A – TfL Consultation leaflet 'Have your say' Proposed changes to buses in Dartford and Crayford (routes 428 and 492)

Appendix B – Initial assessment of the proposed changes to bus routes 428 and 492 in Dartford Area

Appendix C – KCC Position Statement

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<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
Have your say – Proposed changes to buses in Dartford and Crayford (routes 428 and 492) – tfl.gov.uk/Dartford-Crayford		Lukman Agboola Principal Transport Planner (01322) 343410	Planning Services, Regeneration	N/A