

**Elmbridge Borough Council's Response to Surrey County Council's
Bus Review Consultation (DRAFT)**

This response follows a presentation by SCC to EBC's Environmental Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2010, during which EBC Members also had the opportunity to ask questions about the proposals for a review of bus services currently being considered by SCC.

This response is based on the outcomes of that meeting and has been drafted in parallel with the response to be submitted by the Elmbridge Community Partnership (ECP), of which EBC is broadly supportive.

Although there is considerable sympathy with the need to reduce the level of subsidy for bus services, it is hoped that the key concerns listed below will be taken into consideration by SCC as part of its consultation process.

Concerns:

School services. EBC is seriously concerned at the proposed reduction to these services and the potential impact on congestion levels and resultant air pollution in Elmbridge if they are removed. Therefore, EBC would like to see these services continue.

Passenger information. It is felt that if there were accurate, real-time information on bus services available to bus passengers at bus stops, more passengers would be encouraged to travel by bus. EBC would therefore like to see the provision of such information, particularly as the proposed changes would mean a greater number of connections within journeys, thus increasing passengers' uncertainty on the overall duration of their journey.

Route changes and rail connections. EBC would like to stress the importance of communities continuing to have good links to train stations following the introduction of any route changes.

Frequency. EBC would like to stress the importance of frequent bus services.

564 service. EBC is concerned that the proposed reduction to this service to one bus an hour will mean long waiting times for connections for the elderly residents of Whiteley Village and greater difficulties for them to attend hospital appointments. In addition this would make it more difficult for those without personal transport of their own to access the Xcel Leisure Complex.

Access to Weybridge Job Centre. EBC is concerned that the proposed reduction and removal of services to Weybridge will have a serious impact on

unemployed residents from the eastern part of the Borough who need to get to the Weybridge Job Centre. The cost of travelling there will increase as a result of the increased number of connections that will need to be made and could well represent 10% of the Jobseekers Allowance.

Electronic smartcards. EBC would support the introduction of an electronic ticketing system for bus journeys, along similar lines to Transport for London's Oyster Card.

Environmental and planning concerns. EBC is concerned that a reduction in bus services will have a potentially negative environmental effect due to increased traffic congestion. One of the objectives of the Draft Core Strategy of the Elmbridge Local Development Framework is to "reduce people's reliance on driving, by...promoting attractive and convenient alternatives to the private car, and in so doing reducing congestion and pollution caused by traffic." Draft Policy CS25 (Travel and Accessibility) sets out the need for "Working in partnership with transport providers to support improvements to transport infrastructure." This policy was the result of a considerable amount of public and community consultation with, amongst others, SCC. Responses to the consultation highlighted the need for improved public transport and in particular a local bus network and concerns around the growing levels of congestion. The need for Local Development Plans to support an improving public transport network and for development to be focused on areas with good access to public transport is also clearly set out in two pieces of central government planning guidance: PPS1 (Sustainable Development) and PPG13 (Transport). The proposals contained within the SCC review are not consistent with the approach being promoted by Elmbridge as a Planning Authority or by central government. If the bus network within the Borough is reduced, EBC is concerned that it may be counterproductive to meeting the aims of both the Borough's Core Strategy and the wider sustainable development outcomes it proposes to address.

The following points have been made by the Elmbridge Community Partnership and have the support of Elmbridge Borough Council.

Connections

The reduction of services will result in bus journeys from Elmbridge to Staines and from all areas of the borough to Weybridge Station and Brooklands requiring at least one connection.

Individuals could have low confidence in using services that are reliant on multiple connections.

There is the possibility of connections not being maintained and this will increase waiting times, particularly impacting upon the elderly.

Journeys which now involve additional connections will also incur the purchase of more than one ticket, therefore increasing the cost of individual journeys.

Will SCC be reviewing timetables to ensure that connections are feasible and timed to minimise waiting time?

- **Access to Weybridge**

Weybridge station is one of a limited number of disabled accessible stations on the main line through the borough.

The Brooklands Hotel due to open this year has been expected to provide jobs to jobseekers in Elmbridge and reliable access to Brooklands is therefore essential to make these jobs accessible to lower income families without access to a vehicle.

Again the proposals would result in an increased cost to accessing Weybridge Station and Brooklands as it would now be a two bus journey, incurring two rather than one fares.

- **Over 60's**

Concern regarding the possible impact of waiting times on connecting routes and also now that the over 60's have free travel it would appear to be a negative impact to then limit their ability to travel.

- **Fares**

Concerns have already been raised with the partnership from members of the community regarding the existing cost of bus fares and the impact this can have on low earners and benefit recipients. OEP would hope that fares do not increase as they disproportionately affect low income families and individuals.

Individual Route concerns

- **564**

Reduction in the service will limit the access of Vicarage Fields residents to basic services. The reduction will also impact on the ability of customers to access Excel.

- **461**
Terminating the service at St Peters Hospital will mean access to Staines for residents of the borough will involve a minimum of one change and the increased journey and waiting time and cost of at least two fares that this will bring. There is a concern particularly for those in the borough who work in Staines and the impact that this could have on their employment and also on future employment opportunities for borough residents.
- **555**
Would SCC consider further extending this route past Hersham and through to Pool Road Industrial Estate West Molesey via Walton Road and Field Common to join up to the 411?