



Proposed changes to R7 bus route in Chelsfield Village, Bromley

Consultation Summary & Response to Issues Raised
June 2022

Consultation Summary

Summary

From 16 July to 27 August 2021 we held a public consultation on proposals to reroute the R7 bus through Chelsfield with the intention of streamlining the route and making it more reliable. The R7 runs half hourly between Chelsfield Village and Chislehurst, via Orpington town centre. The proposals involved removing the clockwise 'loop' which the R7 takes via Bucks Cross Road, Maypole Road and Hewitt's Road before returning to Chelsfield via the Court Road Orpington by-pass. Three bus stops would no longer be served by the R7, at Bucks Cross Road, Jubilee Road and the Bo Peep public house.

The R7 has a poor reliability record and the proposals were intended to improve this for customers along the majority of the bus route, while acknowledging that the relatively small number of customers currently using the affected bus stops would then have to walk between an additional 350metres and 1100metres to access the R7 at the Chelsfield Five Bells stop. There are no other bus services serving this part of the route.

We ran a consultation exercise with two questions asking respondents to give their views on the proposals.

We received 167 responses to the consultation, including seven from stakeholders. From the responses we received to the open questions, there was general opposition to the proposal from both the public and stakeholders.

Next Steps

We have decided to make the changes as consulted on to benefit the highest number of passengers and will be proceeding with our proposal to curtail the route at Chelsfield Five Bells. The service change will take effect from 28 May 2022.

We are aware that some residents will be disappointed by our decision and we would like to thank all those who took the time to participate and provide their feedback. We would like to provide assurance that all comments are taken into full consideration when proposals are being developed. We use consultation to make a better informed decision. Often consultation will highlight issues that we may not have considered as part of the planning process. The consultation also forms part of a wider decision making process that includes looking impacts on passengers across the whole service. It is not always possible to accommodate every request and suggestion. We hope this report may go some way to explaining the rationale for our decision on these particular proposals.

Our bus user data shows that although our consultation received a relatively high number of responses, the number of passengers using the three stops in

question is very small and only accounts for an average of 3% of all trips on the R7, for Bucks Cross Road and Jubilee Road this means an average of 10 passengers per day and at the Bo Peep, six passengers a day. Improving the reliability of the R7 as a whole would result in better journey times for the 800 passengers a day who use the route as a whole.

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About the consultation

Who we consulted

A letter was sent to 239 households and businesses along the affected part of the route and in Chelsfield Village. An email was also sent to the local ward councillors and Bromley council officers. Respondents were invited to submit their views via our online survey on our dedicated consultation portal at Haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/bus-route-r7 or write in via email or letter to haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk or FREEPOST TfL Have Your Say.

Results of the consultation

We received 167 responses to the consultation of which the majority of respondents were opposed to the proposals. 137 respondents gave views by completing the online survey with the remainder submitting their views by email or letter. Seven stakeholders submitted a response, one by email and six by online survey.

The survey consisted of two open questions, with respondents able to provide comments for both.

Responses to Question 1 – Thinking about our proposal as a whole, what effect do you think it will have on the way you choose to travel?

Of the 167 responses received the most common responses are summarised here:

Issues raised – Question 1	Total
Proposal would lead respondent to use their car or a taxi/private hire vehicle rather than take public transport	41
Concern expressed regarding negative impact on staff and customers wishing to travel to the Bo Peep public house	26
Concern expressed that proposal would isolate residents, including vulnerable residents	24
Concern expressed that proposal would generally restrict travel opportunities/choices for local residents	19
Respondent noted that there is no other public transport available in this area	18
Concern that proposal would mean much longer walk to a bus stop	17
Concern expressed that proposal would negatively impact local businesses in the area	17
Concern expressed that the proposal would lead to a longer walk to a bus stop along roads with no pavements	16
Concern expressed that the proposal would lead to a longer walk to a bus stop along roads with no streetlighting	12
Concern expressed that the proposal would negatively impact staff and patients at Chelsfield Park Hospital	12
Concern expressed that the bus is needed for local schoolchildren	10

Responses to Question 2 – Please let us know if the proposal would have a positive or negative impact on you or the journeys you make.

Of the 137 respondents who provided a comment for this question, 110 (80 per cent) stated that the proposals would have a negative impact on their journey.

A smaller number of people also took the opportunity to make further comments and reiterated their remarks from question 1.

Our responses to the issues raised during the consultation are provided on page 7 of this report.

Stakeholder responses

We received responses from seven stakeholders, and these are summarised below.

London Travelwatch

Expressed concern that passengers who currently use the bus stops on Bucks Cross Road, Maypole Road or Hewitts Road will have significant additional walking distances to reach the nearest alternative bus stops. This is exacerbated by these roads either having narrow footways or no footway. This is particularly concerning as the Bucks Cross Road bus stop serves a hospital, school and day nursery, passengers for which may be more vulnerable pedestrians.

Travelwatch also noted that whilst this proposal will disadvantage a small number of passengers, we recognise that by shortening the route it will benefit from improved reliability overall and the journey time be improved for some users. It will also avoid the need to reduce the frequency of the route from the current two buses an hour (one an hour in evenings and Sunday).

Peter Fortune AM, London Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley

The Assembly member objected to the proposal on behalf of his constituents and cited the following reasons for this:

TfL's proposal will have a detrimental effect on many constituents, many of whom are elderly and some of whom have mobility problems.

The consultation materials do not accurately reflect the history of bus services in Chelsfield, for example the R3 previously served the village until it was replaced by the R7, this is not referenced.

TfL should provide further explanation of the view that the frequency of the R7 would need to be reduced if the loop continues to be served. There have always been two buses per hour Monday to Saturday and one bus per hour on Sundays, on both the R7 and its precursor the R3.

Roadworks at the roundabout at the junction of Warren Road and Court Road has been responsible for traffic delays, which would have affected the R7 for many months, but this work is now completed.

The proposed re-routing would involve a right turn from Church Road into Court Road which would be more dangerous than the current arrangement using Hewitts Roundabout to access Court Road.

There are no streetlights along Maypole Road and Hawstead Lane and neither road has pavements. Consequently, those residents who would need to walk along these roads to access the bus after dark would be extremely unsafe.

Councillor Angela Page – Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom ward, London Borough of Bromley

Based on feedback from residents, the councillor stated that this will have a severe impact - not on the way they 'choose' to travel, but the way they would 'have' to travel. This proposal would have a significantly negative impact on residents' journeys.

Councillor Mike Botting – Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom ward, London Borough of Bromley

Having spoken to many residents, the councillor stated that this will prevent them using a safe bus route and force them to walk along small country lanes with poor sight lines and no street lighting. This proposal would have a severe detrimental impact on ability to travel, in fact one resident has stated that it is effectively a jail sentence as they would not now be able to leave their home.

Shoreham Parish Council

Shoreham Parish Council object to the proposals on behalf of the residents of Well Hill. They state that the R7 is the closest bus stop to Well Hill and the proposal would mean an extra 15 minutes walk to the nearest bus stop. This will have a severe impact on Well Hill residents that use the R7. Shoreham Parish Council also believed that the consultation was not adequately publicised.

Chelsfield Village Society

The proposal would disenfranchise a whole section of the semi-rural community, including residents who will have to walk significant distances on narrow country lanes to catch the bus. The Society particularly mention employees of local businesses, including Chelsfield Park Hospital, The Bo

Peep, schools and so on. Concern was expressed that the proposal could add some 20-30 minutes to journey times for residents or employees on the impacted route.

Hewitt's Farm Shop

As a local business whose only nearby bus route is the R7, the respondent feels that the proposal will negatively affect a large number of local residents and business owners. Many customers use the R7 to travel to this shop. This often includes young families with whom the 'pick your own' farm shop is very popular. If the local bus stop is removed customers would have to walk from the Five Bells and cross a busy road to access the farm, which is not ideal and may deter customers. This is likely to also impact on the twice yearly funfair which the farm hosts as many attendees are families with children and teenagers who use the bus to travel to the fair.

Petitions

After the close of the consultation, we were made aware of a petition being run on change.org opposing the proposed changes to the R7 route. The petition had attracted 377 signatures.

Equalities Assessment

An updated Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been prepared and will be published alongside this report.

The EQIA acknowledges that for passengers regularly using the three stops affected by the curtailment, impacts will be negative. However, it notes that these stops currently do not meet TfL's accessibility standards and that the small number of passengers directly impacted by the curtailment has been balanced against the benefit of improved journey times for the rest of the R7 route which will benefit all passengers, including those sharing protected characteristics.

Our responses to issues commonly raised

Issue	Our response
<p>Concern that the proposal will lead to increased car use for those no longer able to access the bus.</p>	<p>Improved journey times across the rest of the R7 route will benefit 800 passengers per day using it and make the route more attractive to those elsewhere on the route as a travel option. A small number of people may need to use alternative transport if the R7 is no longer readily available where they live. Our recent data suggests that there are currently around 10 passengers a day using the Bucks Cross Road stop, 10 passengers a day using the Jubilee Road stop and six passengers a day using the Bo Peep stop.</p>
<p>Concern that the proposal will negatively impact on staff and customers at the Bo Peep public house and other local businesses.</p>	<p>Our data shows that a very small number of passengers use the Bo Peep pub stop daily – an average of six passengers a day. It is therefore thought that impact on the pub's patrons would be minimal.</p>
<p>Concern that curtailing the route will further isolate residents, potentially vulnerable people, and restrict travel choices and access to the transport network for this rural area.</p>	<p>As above, our data shows that the numbers of people using the stops to be taken out of service is very low. Current users of the Bucks Cross Road stop would have an additional four minute (approximately) walk of 350metres to the next nearest bus stop at Chelsfield, Five Bells, this is considered an acceptable walking distance to access the bus network. We acknowledge that the current users of the Jubilee Road and Bo Peep stops will have a longer walk. However, the small numbers of passengers involved and wider benefits for passengers using the service elsewhere mean we feel this is justified.</p> <p>Passengers with mobility issues are eligible for free Dial-a-Ride services which may offer more flexible travel options than the existing R7.</p>
<p>Concern that this will mean a longer walk to a bus stop, along</p>	<p>There are very small numbers of passengers usually using these stops</p>

<p>narrow country lanes with no pavements or streetlighting</p>	<p>and the benefits to the much higher numbers of bus users who would benefit from improved journey times means that the balance falls in favour of improving the reliability of the R7 for the majority of passengers.</p> <p>The London Borough of Bromley are the highway authority for the roads concerned and it would be for them to consider whether improvements to the streetlighting are required.</p>
<p>Concern that patients and staff at Chelsfield Park Hospital will be negatively affected</p>	<p>Patients and staff travelling to/from the hospital by bus would use the Bucks Cross Road stop and would need to make an additional 350metre (approx. 4 minute) walk to/from the Five Bells stop to access the R7. This is considered an acceptable additional walk.</p>
<p>Concern that the bus service is needed by local schoolchildren</p>	<p>There is no data to suggest that school travel demand represents a significant proportion of passengers using the affected stops.</p>
<p>There have been roadworks on Court Road which affected the reliability of the R7, but these have now finished. Why are you still proposing the curtail the route?</p>	<p>Concern about the reliability of the R7 has existed for some time and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic beginning in 2020 and the roadworks in question. This has continued to be an issue with the R7 only achieving 79 per cent of 'on time departures' over the past year. This does not meet an acceptable standard of reliability for our bus services and needs to be addressed to improve services for customers.</p>
<p>Why can't you just remove the double run in Orpington High Street instead to save time?</p>	<p>Curtailling the R7 at the Chelsfield Five Bells would save around six minutes on a round trip, which in a bus journey time and operations context is significant. This gives the route more recovery time between journeys and ensures buses can better meet their scheduled departures. While it would be possible to do something similar elsewhere on the route such as not serving the Walnuts Shopping Centre in Orpington, we always aim to</p>

	<p>maximise benefit for the highest number of passengers and in this case up to 350 passengers a day would be disadvantaged by the R7 not serving the Walnuts centre.</p>
<p>How are passenger numbers calculated? What about Freedom Pass holders who don't touch in?</p>	<p>Our passenger numbers include estimates for those not touching in, such as paper tickets (such as rail tickets including a bus element or non-London Freedom Pass holders). London Councils' issued Freedom Passes have to be used on Oyster readers when boarding the bus. We consider our passenger counts to be robust and a good indication of demand for services.</p>