

Option C⁺

Our understanding is that option C⁺ does not differ from option C in terms of restrictions to traffic and vehicle movement. We have already given Leicestershire County Council our proposed routes for all services should option C be chosen and these proposals do not change.

The bus routes suggested under option C⁺ have been proposed without any professional experience of the highways network, traffic flows, scheduling buses or operating bus services. It would therefore seem naive to consider this a viable option knowing bus operators are unable to commercially serve the suggested routes.

There are several reasons why bus operators will not subject their customers to the proposed “Walker Loop”.

Inconvenience to customers

As proposed in option C⁺ all buses will drop off customers in Baxter Gate as their main town centre stop. This would be convenient for people wishing to access the shops in the south east of the town but for customers who wish to get to Ashby Square, Derby Square, Market Street or the Cattle Market they will have further to walk. This makes the trip less convenient, less attractive and therefore less likely to happen.

Customers travelling southbound on services such as **skylink** will have to alight on the wrong side of the inner relief road, cross at a crossing point and then walk from the outskirts of the town centre. Many, although they may find it inconvenient, will still be able to make this trip but a significant number of impaired, infirm or elderly customers simply won't - leaving them to either find an alternative means of transport, an alternative destination or not travel at all. On local **Kinchbus** services over 50% of our customers fall into this category. This was supported by RNIB when we discussed the matter with them who were in favour of buses running through the town.

Lack of interchange

It is perceived that option C⁺ would improve interchange from one bus to another. In some instances this would be the case, the vast majority of connections in Loughborough are made onto buses which connect people to Loughborough College, Loughborough train station or Loughborough University. Unfortunately these connections would not be available at Baxter Gate. **sprint** would be unable to access Baxter Gate due to the pedestrianised zone restricting it to the north of the town. Connections with **skylink** towards Leicester would also not be possible.

Modal shift

One of the main reasons our services are popular is that many travel the most direct route from A to B. This is something that has been proven to increase patronage and is especially powerful when encouraging modal shift from car to bus. From research carried

out on customers who have a car for the journey their 2nd top reason for choosing to travel by bus was because of a “direct route/fast journey time”, only behind “convenience of stop” and in front of “value for money”.

Car owner’s top reason for using the bus is the “convenience of stop”. Should buses be pushed to the inner relief road and the outskirts of the town we would also lose this advantage.

To implement the “Walker Loop” and lose these advantages would likely see people return to the comfort of their cars, therefore increasing the number of vehicles on the road. This in turn would increase congestion within the town in doing so increasing pollution and the carbon footprint.

Operational impact

From research carried out across all services our customers’ number one demand is punctuality. This puts an enormous emphasis on getting our timetables right and ensuring that we have enough recovery time built into the timetable to mitigate any delays or hold ups. There is a fine balance against making a timetable efficient to ensure the bus maximises the opportunity to gain revenue without customers sitting on a bus for 30 minutes waiting for time when the route is only 15 minutes long.

Currently our routes work at maximum efficiency and recovery time is adequate to take account of 95% of delays. This means that any additional time cannot simply be absorbed into the current timetables as this will reduce recovery and therefore directly impact of the amount of delay we can withstand leading to a reduction in punctuality.

We recently intended to extend our **Kinchbus 12** route to encompass Mitchell Drive in Thorpe Acre. Although this route extension would likely have increased customer numbers and revenue we were unable to justify absorbing the additional 3 minutes into our timetable and jeopardising our punctuality.

From the 26th January we have changed the route of **Kinchbus 5** to enter the hospital grounds. In order to do account for the 2 minutes addition to the journey we had to alter the route around the Ravensthorpe Estate - saving ourselves 2 minutes of time without reducing our penetration of the estate or market catchment.

The “Walker Loop” would increase journey time significantly resulting in us being unable to operate with our current resources. This is why we informed Leicestershire of our route proposals for option C as we did. Any additional resource is likely to cost around £150,000 a year.

Additional time

The average speed of a Kinchbus on A6 through Loughborough town centre (Bridge Street to Southfield Road) is 2.88 mph (based on actual journey times monitored through our GPRS telematics system, accurate to the second). Based on the increased distance needed to travel required by the “Walker Loop” (0.25 miles - suggested by BID Loughborough) it would take on average an additional 5 minutes 13 seconds per journey.

The above time increase does not take into account that on southbound journeys town services (such as **Kinchbus 5, 11/12**) using the “Walker Loop” will also have to;

- continue to wait in the same traffic around the IRR which currently uses the A6
- negotiate 13 sets of signalled junctions (5 more than the current route)
- loop back onto the IRR out of Baxter Gate (after already leaving it) to again face all traffic passing south through Loughborough
- increased traffic in peak times (the above timings were taken at off peak times)

Not only does this create a time penalty far in excess of what our bus services and timetables can withstand but it also has a huge detrimental effect on customers’ perception as we loop back on ourselves.

It is for the above reasons that town services have no choice but to be severed in Loughborough and through customer be made to transfer through the pedestrianised section.

Loughborough’s Economy

In January 2013, **Kinchbus** faced a diversionary route on **Kinchbus 2** due to a road closure between Barrow and Quorn. We ran a free shuttle bus to connect customers between Loughborough and Quorn to the normal service vehicles. Over an 8 week period, this minor inconvenience for customers resulted in us seeing a 12% drop in customer numbers - compared to the 4 weeks prior and post closure. It is therefore reasonable to expect a similar drop in patronage should we have to sever or inconvenience our customers again due to full pedestrianisation of Loughborough town.

Based on our customer numbers this would likely lead to a reduction of 3,600 journeys into Loughborough by bus customers every week. A recent report commissioned by Greener Journeys and carried out by Leeds University (based on all UK bus services outside of London) showed that on average a bus users spend per city centre trip was £54. Based on these figures Loughborough’s economy would be susceptible to a loss of over £10million a year simply by inconveniencing bus users.



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