

**DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Two Deputations received:

- (i) **Deputation - To prevent the City Sightseeing Bus being routed through Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent (East)** (referred from the Full Council meeting of 19 July 2012)

**(Spokesperson) - Mr Christopher Goss**

On 3 March, the City Sightseeing Bus, operated by the Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Company, was re-routed down the east side of Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent, from Eastern Road down to Marine Parade. The Company obtained a summer 2012 permit for the re-routing from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner from 3 March. The buses run daily at half hourly intervals from 10.35am to 6.35pm, that is 17 journeys per day, from 28 April till 16 September, then with reduced frequency until end September. This deputation is from the residents and requests the Council to take the necessary steps to prevent the bus being routed through Sussex Square/Lewes Crescent once the current permit has expired.

Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent, along with Arundel Terrace and Chichester Terrace, form the Kemp Town Estate, which has a Grade 1 listing. The Estate is a beautiful and cherished part of Brighton and we as residents want to share it with our Brighton community. We believe, however, that riding on a double decker bus, of up to 18 tons fully laden, which is travelling at speed through the Estate is not the way to enjoy, preserve and share its beauty and atmosphere. We believe that the bus is endangering the Estate's inhabitants. Many of the buses run empty or nearly empty, which is not good in terms of fuel use and maintenance, climate change and the environment. Scheduled bus services have never before run through the Estate.

We believe the Estate should be kept as a relaxed pedestrian area which all can share. We very much welcome visitors but believe strongly that the Estate can best be enjoyed on foot. For those unable to explore it on foot, the best way to get a good view of the buildings and gardens in their entirety is from the bus on Marine Parade or Eastern Road. The viewer does not gain much in addition from seeing just a few of the houses up close. We are also concerned that the bus will set a precedent in changing the road from being mostly residential to one with broader commercial use which will be very detrimental to the Estate.

This deputation by the residents has the full support of the Kemp Town Society. We will present to the Council at its meeting on 19 July an accompanying petition from local residents. The Brunswick and Adelaide Residents' Group, (covering Adelaide

Crescent, Brunswick Square - which is also Grade 1 listed - and Lansdowne Place), also supports this Deputation. Tour buses passed through Brunswick Square at one time but no longer do so.

We understand that the Council's Conservation Advisory Group (CAG), at their 24 April 2012 meeting, discussed the re-routing of the bus through the Estate and that the Group agreed that it should write to the bus company expressing its concern and that the KTS should raise this concern with its members. We understand that CAG's concerns are similar to those raised in this deputation.

We were also heartened to hear of the strong action taken by the Bath Council in 1998 when the safety and environment of the Royal Crescent in Bath (in particular the historical cobbled roadway) was endangered by sightseeing buses. The Council there arranged a public enquiry which resulted in the closure of one end of the Crescent to prevent through traffic. We also understand that the closure has yielded unexpected benefits to the Crescent from enabling visitors and residents to enjoy a peaceful and relaxed primarily pedestrian environment in the Crescent.

**Response provided at the Full Council meeting of 19 July 2012:**

**Councillor Davey, Chair of the Transport Committee**

"The authority has very limited power to force a bus company to change a route. I've been given a letter by the conservation advisory group to Mr French just a couple of days ago. What I suggest is that we pass the petition on to the bus company and I'll put a covering letter in with that and it will come to the next transport committee. So I think if the bus company do not agree to reroute it this summer, at the transport committee this October it is discussed as a committee and then with you present, the committee if it should be so minded could write to Mr French, to the bus company and to the transport commissioner expressing concerns about that route so I think we can work together on taking this forward."

## Annex: Summary of Engineer's Opinion and other Supporting Information and Photographs

### 1. Safety

We engaged the engineers Hemsley Orrell Partnership to provide an opinion on the safety aspects. A copy of their report has been provided to the Council and its findings are summarized here.

There are communal gardens in the middle of the Estate which all the flats and houses in the Estate own and maintain together. The owners and tenants use the gardens very extensively as their main outdoor living space as few of the flats have their own gardens. There is therefore a continual pedestrian flow across the road where the bus currently runs, of residents from the flats and houses to three garden gates. The first gate is just below the point where the bus turns from Eastern Road into Sussex Square. The second is right on the sharp bend half way down the road. The Appendix to the engineer's report has an aerial view of the Estate and the bus route. It also contains 6 photos, the first four of which are reproduced below and which show the bus rounding the sharp bend; photos 5 and 6 in the report show the bus entering Sussex Square from Eastern road near the top gate.

As shown in photos 1-4 below, the bus has to cross the centre line of the road into the path of oncoming traffic in order to round the sharp bend. This makes it difficult for it to pass oncoming vehicles, which are forced by the bus to go close to the railings, and so also become a danger to pedestrians, especially those entering or leaving the gardens. The road's overall profile is also ill-suited for regular use by large vehicles, because it is relatively narrow and its sides along its entire length have an unusually steep camber, so buses drive near the middle of the road, even away from the sharp bend. There is little warning time for pedestrians when the bus turns off Eastern Road, before it passes the first garden gate.

A large proportion of the pedestrians at risk are children and old people who are used to the road being quiet, with only neighbourhood cars and the occasional delivery vehicle moving along it. They are not prepared for a large bus travelling at speed and this is especially risky for small children, who may be less cautious and whose sight lines may be impeded by the parked cars, and for the elderly whose reaction times are slower. The added care needed to cross the road also reduces the enjoyment of the garden.

### 2. Integrity of the Buildings

Under the Grade 1 listing rules, the residents are required to preserve the buildings and adhere to very strict guidelines regarding the avoidance of harm or change to the structures and their appearance. We believe that this strict avoidance of harm criterion should be applied to avoid any risk of damage to the buildings and the environs from unnecessary vehicle traffic. The road is edged on the garden side by unusual steeply sloping cobble gutters, which are original from when the Estate was built and are probably fragile and at risk from the passage of regular heavy traffic. Cellars are located under the pavement to the front of the houses; in some cases these extend about 1.5 metres under the road itself and some of the cellars have been converted to full residential use. While the consultant engineers consider it would be difficult to establish a

definitive connection between regular passage of buses and structural damage to the buildings, why subject the buildings and road to this unnecessary risk?

3. Photographs: Bus at sharp bend at Sussex Square/ Lewes Crescent/ access gate to communal gardens.

**Photo 1:** Bus and cars entering bend in opposite directions at the same time.



**Photo 2:** Bus swings out to avoid parked vehicles. Oncoming cars pull tight to left.



**Photo 3:** Cars pass bus at pedestrian access to communal gardens



**Photo 4:** Bus swings wide into opposite lane at pedestrian access gate.



- (ii) Deputation on behalf of the Western and Church Rd Traders Association regarding changes to loading times, business consultation and rises in parking charges and their effect on business in the city.**

**(Spokesperson) - Mr Adam Campbell (St Peter's & North Laine)**

- (iii) Deputation on loading issues on Queens Place.**

**(Spokesperson)- Vicky Wilson**

