



SOUTHERN VECTIS BUS ROUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 63/19

10 AUGUST 2020

The purpose of this Report is to ask Members to consider a potential change to the route through the town of the Southern Vectis Bus Services.

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) Issues with the route of the No 3 service were prompted during the discussions with the Isle of Wight Council about their proposal for the implementation of government guidance on social distancing in town centres.
 - b) It was clear to us that the obvious need to suspend the Boots Bus Stop would result in much larger numbers of people using the one at Spring Hill.
 - c) After discussions, the Town Council's Economic Officer Nick Cox developed alternative routing for the No. 3 that would avoid the need to use the Spring Hill stop and the proposal to implement that was submitted to the Officers responsible for implementing Social Distancing.
 - d) In the event, that was ignored with the Officers just arranging for the suspension of the Boots stop without further discussion with the Town Council.
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2) THE PROPOSAL

- a) The need to consider the proposed alternative arises because the predicted concerns about numbers queuing at Spring Hill have actually occurred and, among other things, have added to the already existing concerns of adjacent residents about access to and littering of their property.
 - b) Complaints have been received from two residents who have made previous unsuccessful attempts to secure meetings with Southern Vectis.
 - c) The proposed alternative routing also has other advantages and I have asked Nick Cox to attend this meeting to answer questions on it: a copy of his original submission to the Isle of Wight Council is attached to this Report.
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K RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to:

- i) support the alternative routing of the No. 3 service; and
 - ii) authorise the Clerk and Nick Cox to progress the option with Officers from the Isle of Wight Council and Southern Vectis.
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Bus Route Considerations to Achieve Full Social Distancing within Ventnor During COVID-19



June 2020

VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

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1 Introduction

This is a review of alternative bus routes for Ventnor Town Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to fully comply with the latest government social distancing guidelines to protect local residents, visitors and those who work in and around the town.

In order to comply with the current social distancing requirements, Ventnor and other townships across the Island will be assessed for compliance by the Isle of Wight Council, and steps to maintain social distancing especially in local towns, will be put in place by Island Roads in terms of footway markings, Covid-19 information signs and barriers to allow people to adhere to social distancing.

This review is specific, in that the focus is on the buses that travel from Newport to Ventnor and then on to Ryde and buses that travel from Ryde to Ventnor and then back to Newport, following the No. 3 bus route. The No. 6 bus route would be unaffected at this time.

2 No. 3 Bus Route from Newport to Ryde

Following the arrows on Fig 1. Below, a bus (No. 3), will enter Ventnor from the top of Spring Hill, first stopping at the bus stop at the top of Spring Hill gardens opposite Grove Road, and then pass down Spring Hill to the Central Car Park bus stop.

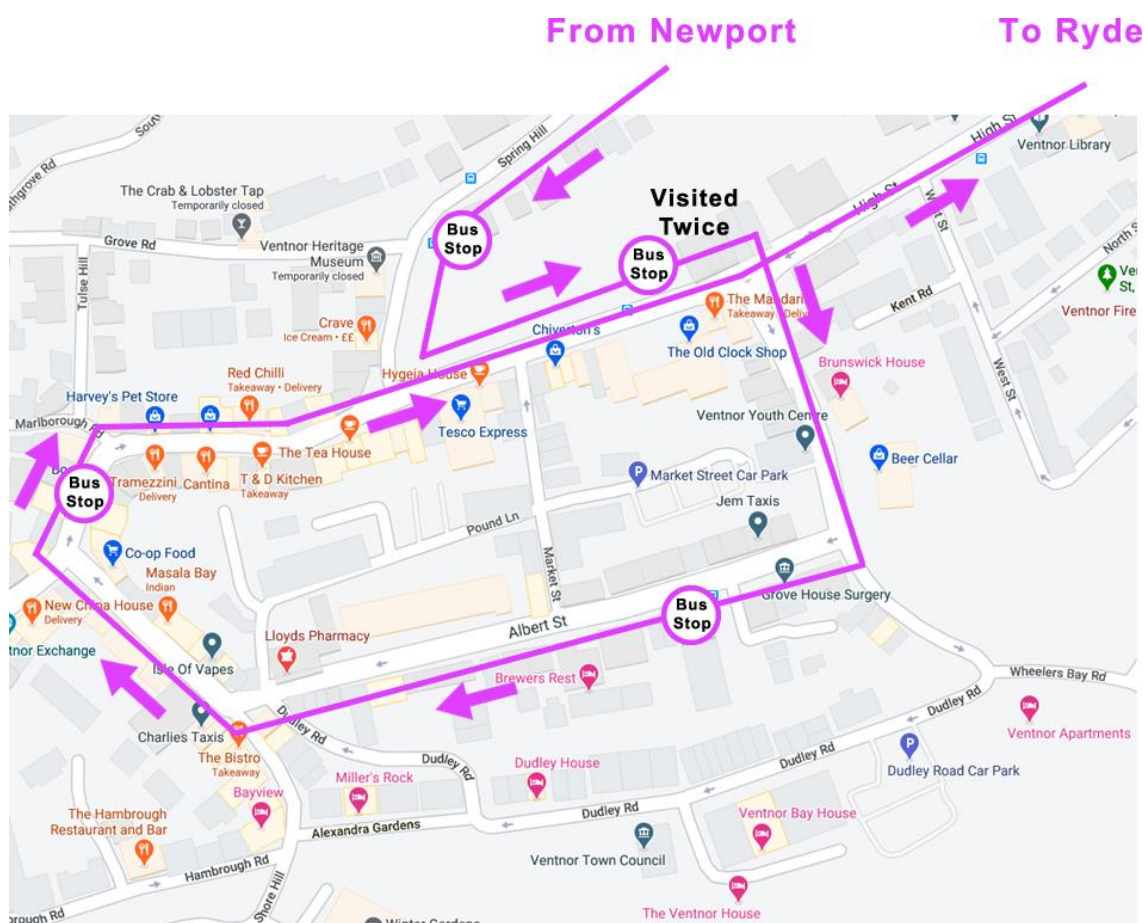


Fig 1: No. 3 buses travelling from Newport to Ryde.

From there the bus will pass down Victoria Street and turn into Albert Road for the Grove House Surgery bus stop and then on to the bus stop outside Boots in the high Street and back up to the Central Car Park bus stop and then on to Ryde.

On this particular route, the proposal is to remove or suspend the bus stop outside Boots. Primarily to prevent overcrowding around the bus stop - which is quite normal on a daily basis, and therefore prevent sensible social distancing. In its place, the proposal is to only pick up passengers at the Central Car Park where social distancing can be observed after the bus has circumvented the town centre once.

Other than informing the general public that the bus stop outside Boots has been suspended and that they should use the bus stop next to the Central Car Park, social distancing can be adequately and properly maintained for the duration of the COVID-19 lockdown. In effect, this bus route requires little intervention and does not pose a problem other than possibly inconvenience and is unlikely to affect the retail businesses in the town centre.

3 No. 3 Bus Route from Ryde to Newport

The No. 3 route shown in Fig. 2 below on the other hand is problematical. The buses come into Ventnor from Ryde via Lesson Road, past Trinity Church and into the top part of Ventnor High Street. Pass down Victoria Street past the surgery bus stop and then on to the bus stop outside Boots. Buses then travel through Ventnor High Street, up Spring Hill turning left on to Boniface Road and onward to Newport. It is an efficient route outside of the restrictions of social distancing.



Fig. 2: No. 3 buses travelling from Newport to Ryde.

However, if the bus stop outside Boots is either removed or suspended, the buses have only two options. Option 1 is to follow the route up to the Spring Hill bus stop or Option 2 bypassing the Spring Hill bus stop in preference for the Central Car Park bus stop.

In the first scenario, people – young to senior citizen – would have to congregate at the Spring Hill bus stop in order to travel to Newport. The bus stop is not that easy to get too for those with accessibility problems. It has no proper bus shelter and has been placed immediately next to the roadside where vehicles, small and large, have to stop and wait for traffic to flow down Spring Hill before proceeding up hill – in effect, it is a highway safety disaster in a badly conceived position, dangerous to pedestrians, bus passengers and traffic alike.

More importantly, the Spring Hill bus stop is literary on top of two private vehicle forecourts, where it has been reported that the owners of these properties have experienced vandalism to their forecourts and properties; and are also raising concerns about having crowds of people waiting for buses outside their properties if the bus stop outside Boots is suspended. Potentially, it is a disaster waiting to happen and is not an efficient solution (correct bus stop), to have in play to both achieve social distancing or maximise highway safety.

The second scenario, Option 2 requires that buses stop next to the Central Car Park. But as shown in Fig. 2 above, buses travelling to Newport would need to pass up Spring Hill. But in order to do that, buses would have to travel around the town a second time and inevitable pick up passengers while doing the town circuit. Again, not a good solution, and Southern Vectis would likely find it ridiculous in terms of scheduling.

4 Alternative No. 3 Bus Route from Ryde to Newport

For the second scenario, and in order to achieve maximum social distancing, passenger safety and all requirements of accessibility, Fig 3. Is proposed for buses travelling from Ryde to Newport via Ventnor.

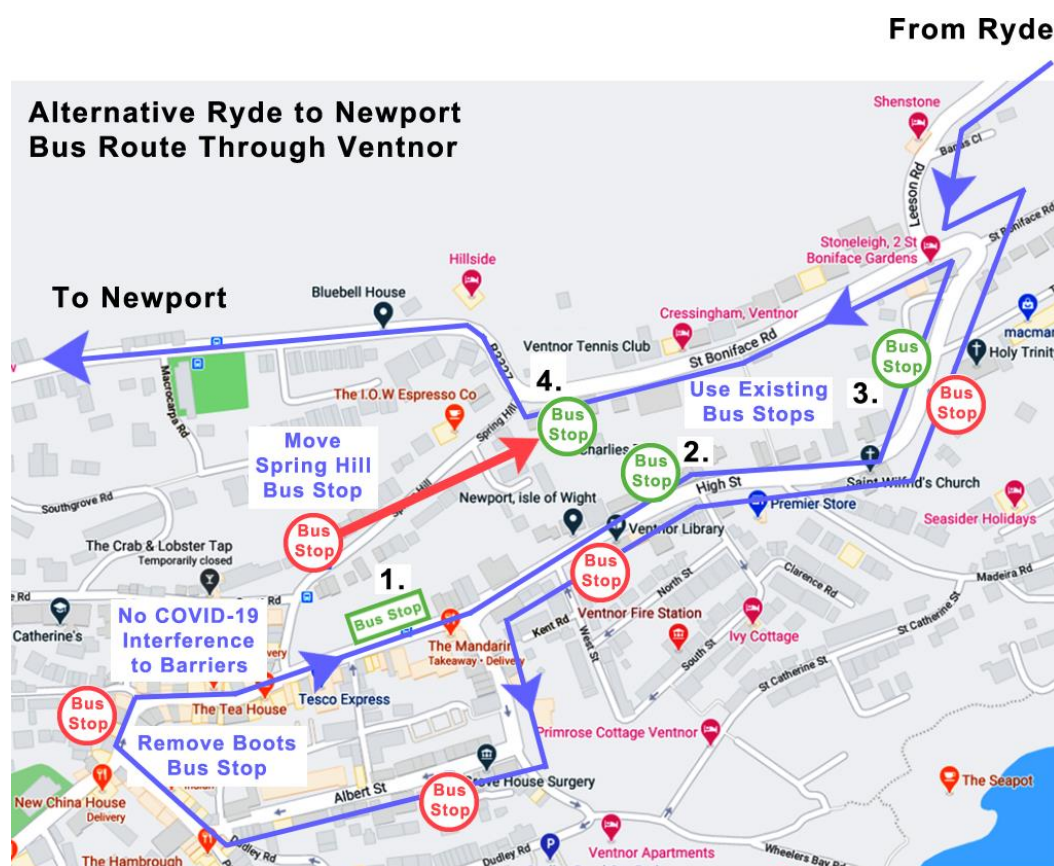


Fig. 3: Alternative route through Ventnor for the No. 3 bus travelling from Newport to Ryde.

In this case, both the bus stop outside Boots and the Newport-side bus stop on Spring Hill can be removed or suspended during this COVID-19 period to achieve proper social distancing, passenger safety and negligible traffic congestion. It also accommodates the problem often encountered at the bus stop outside Boots when both the No 3 buses from Ryde to Newport and Newport to Ryde arrive simultaneously. The proposal is to only use the bus stop next to the Central Car Park and only circumvent the town once.

This requires altering the bus route to allow Ryde to Newport buses to travel from the Central Car Park back along the top High Street pasted Trinity Church bearing left onto St Boniface Road and then on to Newport. In order to supplement the removal or suspension of the Newport-side Spring Hill bus stop, a temporary (hopefully permanent) bus stop needs to be located at the very top of the junction with Spring Hill and St Boniface Road.

There are several advantages to this proposal in that buses returning to Newport via Ventnor do not have to move around the town twice; and beneficially, the bus stops towards Trinity Church can also pick up additional passengers and provide a better service for that particular local area instead of people having to walk down to the Central Car Park bus stop.

While buses travelling from Newport to Ryde can still use Spring Hill, returning buses would have to take this alternative route which is more efficient in terms of safety, social distancing, accessibility and acceptance by local residents; and does not require major adjustments by Southern Vectis. It should have been implemented years ago, but now there is an opportunity to rectify this situation.