

TWC/2017/0208

Foot Bridge to Telford Central Railway Station, Telford, Shropshire

Minor amendment to planning permission reference TWC/2016/0641 (Erection of replacement footbridge following demolition and removal of existing bridge structure together with associated level alterations, provision of retaining structures and access alterations) to omit pedestrian access ramp and supporting earthworks and amend the design of remaining ramps, staircases and supporting structures

APPLICANT

Telford and Wrekin Council

RECEIVED

13/03/2017

PARISH

Lawley and Overdale

WARD

Ketley and Overdale

OFFICER Steven Drury

1.0 PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application seeks minor material amendments to existing planning permission reference TWC/2016/0641 which granted permission for the erection of a replacement footbridge, retaining structures, ramps, walkways and associated infrastructure, following the demolition and removal of the existing footbridge.
- 1.2 The proposed amendments will involve changes to the access provisions to the bridge deck from both platforms at Telford Central Railway Station. More specifically the amendments will consist of the following: -
- Omission of pedestrian access ramp (and supporting earthworks) linking the bridge deck to westbound platform 2,
 - Amendments to the staircase position and design linking the bridge deck to platforms on both sides of the railway line,
 - Ramped access to platform 1 to be provided through retention of existing ramped approach which will be connected to the new bridge via a 31m steel ramp on piers.
- 1.3 The amendments proposed are sought as a result of increasing construction costs arising due to factors such as poor ground conditions under the earthwork ramps which require additional piling and groundworks. Limited funding is available for the project and the applicant has therefore sought to explore ways to minimise costs without compromising bridge design and concept.
- 1.4 The remainder of the scheme will be as per the approved application under TWC/2016/641.
- 1.5 The proposed replacement bridge will be erected alongside the existing footbridge which will remain in operation until the new bridge is completed and brought into use.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site is located on the north eastern edge of Telford Town Centre immediately to the south of the M54 and to the north east of a zone of office and commercial development to the north of the town centre. The existing bridge currently provides a pedestrian link from Telford Central Railway Station to the town centre via Ironmasters Way and Lawn Central. The bridge spans the two track railway line, the A442 Queensway and A5 Rampart Way.
- 2.2 Land immediately to the north is woodland which forms a green buffer alongside the M54 motorway. Land to the east comprises Telford Central Station, station car parking, Euston Way pub and Premier Inn hotel. To the west of Rampart Way is commercial development and Staples retail unit to the south subject to an approved application to subdivide into three retail units and a gymnasium under TWC/2016/0617.
- 2.3 Despite being well enclosed on both side by rising levels and well treed areas, the bridge is highly visible on approach from the north and south and is visible in passing from the M54. The bridge is also well used as the pedestrian link to the town centre for people arriving at Telford Central Station by train and is also part of National Cycle Route (NCR) 55.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 TWC/2016/0641 - Erection of replacement footbridge following demolition and removal of existing bridge structure together with associated level alterations, provision of retaining structures and access alterations – Granted 20th October 2016

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1.1 Core Strategy:

CS3: Telford
CS4: Central Telford
CS9: Accessibility and Social Inclusion
CS12: Natural Environment
CS13: Environmental Resources
CS14: Cultural, Historic and Built Environment
CS15: Urban Design

4.1.2 Wrekin Local Plan:

UD2: Design Criteria
UD3: Urban Design Assessments
UD4: Landscape Design
TC1: Town Centre
TC14: Town Centre Design

4.1.3 Central Telford Area Action Plan (CTAAP):

TC7: Telford Gateway
CT13: Pedestrian and Cycle Network

CT15: Design
CT17: Public Realm
CT19: Biodiversity
CT20: Landscape

4.1.4 Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Submission Version June 2016)

EC5: Telford Town Centre
BE1: Design Criteria

5.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

5.1 Parish/Town Council Response

5.1.1 Lawley and Overdale Parish Council: No comment

5.2 Standard consultation responses

5.2.1 Drainage: No comment

5.2.2 Environmental Health (Pollution Control): No comment

5.2.3 Environmental Health (Contaminated Land): No comment

5.2.4 Arboricultural: Support

5.2.5 Public Rights of Way: No objection

Having looked at the plans and the strategic path network, I am satisfied that the current design of the proposed bridge, along with the proposed ground level routes, will not disadvantage any category of rights of way user. The provision of lifts at the Station end of the bridge will be an improved facility for wheelchair/pushchair users who currently are obliged to negotiate a ramp with a steeper than recommended gradient.

5.2.6 Ecology: Comment

No objection in principle. Recommends conditions and informatives to be added to any decision notice. Requests further clarification on areas subject to tree removal and potential requirement for preliminary roosting surveys to be carried out in extended temporary laydown areas.

5.2.7 Highways England: No objection

Confirm response remains the same to the initial proposal sent July 28 2016 - have no additional comments to make.

5.2.8 Network Rail: No comment

Network Rail has no comments to make.

5.2.9 Shropshire Fire Service: No comment

5.3 Public consultation responses

5.3.1 One comment received from a member of the public raising the following points: -

- 1) Questions what happens when the lift on the Westbound platform is out of commission. When it is, there will be absolutely NO disabled access to and from the Westbound platform.
- 2) There is no need to close and stop up the layby along the A442 which is heavily used at present. This would allow vehicle access to drop off or collect a disabled person in case the lift is out of commission.
- 3) Please reconsider the use of a GRP soffit to the bridge span. This will be the first part of the bridge to start to deteriorate and look shabby.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Having regard to the development plan policy and other material considerations including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- Principle of Development
- Visual Impact
- Access Issues
- Trees and Ecology Issues

6.2 Principle of Development

6.2.1 The principle of the development has been established through granting of TWC/2016/0641 on 20th October 2016. This application simply seeks to amend the access arrangements to the bridge deck from either side of the railway line. All other aspects of the scheme remain as approved.

6.2.2 Overall, the replacement bridge will improve connectivity to and from the town centre from the railway station, enhancing the experience at the point of arrival in the town centre by rail which is considered to be of significant benefit.

6.3 Visual Impact

6.3.1 The proposed alterations will result in changes to the appearance of the approaches to the approved bridge structure. The most significant change will be to the south east side of the railway line (alongside platform 2) where the proposed access ramp will no longer be provided. This would have involved the provision of a significant engineered embankment, extending 85m in length and raising to a maximum height of approximately 7 metres. This aspect of the scheme would have formed a substantial feature in the area immediately alongside the A442 and railway line therefore its omission will ensure a more open aspect to this part of the development site.

6.3.2 The amended proposal will see the 'drum' area in between the two bridge decks accessed by a steel staircase comprising three flights and two landings which will open onto a smaller raised area to the rear of Platform 2. Precise details of the materials, design and colour of the staircase and handrails will need to be submitted as a condition of the planning approval but the indicative

elevations suggest this aspect of the scheme will respect the character and appearance of the approved bridge design.

- 6.3.3 The alterations to the north-east side of the railway line (Platform 1) will see the existing ramped approach utilised instead of providing a new retaining structure. The ramp will connect to the new bridge via a 31m steel bridge supported by piers. This also avoids the need to encroach into the adjacent woodland areas. The staircase access to/from Platform 1 will be provided by a steel staircase accessed directly from the north east end of the bridge landing area. As with the amendments to the platform 2, the proposal will ensure a more open aspect within the station, increasing natural light and enhancing the character and feel upon arrival at the station by train.
- 6.3.4 Landscaping: As with the original approval, a full hard and soft landscaping scheme will be provided in order to complement the proposed footbridge structure, however, as no details are available at this stage, this will be requested as a condition should planning approval be granted.
- 6.3.5 The amended proposals will not affect the appearance of the main bridge deck and span which remains as approved. In visual terms, the omission of retaining structures and embankments will be of benefit to the station and the revised staircase, ramps and bridge links will respect the scale and appearance of the overall development. The application therefore continues to comply with all relevant local plan policies and national guidance.

6.4 Access Issues

- 6.4.1 The applicant advises that the revised design continues to significantly improve accessibility for all users, whilst working with the physical constraints of the bridge's location, by: -
- Providing the first lift accessible station in the borough;
 - Continuing to provide ramped access to the bridge from the north east side, providing step free access for pedestrians, cyclists and the National Cycle Route 55.
 - Reducing the gradient of the bridge to 1:20, compared to the current main span gradient of 1:17;
 - Providing 'wheelramps' within the staircases on both sides of the railway line for use by cyclists using the train station;
 - Providing a more open, visible structure and approaches, including lighting, improving the user experience especially outside of daylight hours.
- 6.4.2 The proposed amendments will affect the way the bridge is accessed from both platforms at the railway station but will not impact upon access arrangements at the south west end onto Ironmasters Way and Rampart Way.
- 6.4.3 At its north eastern end, ramped access will continue to be provided, utilising the ramped approach to the existing bridge which will link to the new bridge landing via a 31m steel bridge. This will ensure that a continuous connection to the National Cycle Route (NCR) 55 is maintained. A new steel staircase at

the end of the bridge deck will carry the majority of pedestrians travelling to and from Platform 1 but for those users that cannot use stairs, the customer lift and ramp will offer an alternative option. Officers are satisfied that this arrangement continues to offer a range of options to cater for a range of customer access requirements.

- 6.4.4 At its south western end, the bridge will continue to provide level access to Ironmasters Way and the town centre beyond and also to Rampart Way via a newly provided footpath.
- 6.4.5 Impact upon Public Rights of Way Network: Currently, the existing bridge provides access for pedestrians and cyclists coming to and from the Town Centre, Priorslee and Stafford Park, and Central Park. The bridge is, therefore, a key link in the strategic rights of way and cycle route network in the Borough. Access from the Town Centre is directly from the path leading from Ironmasters Way and access from Stafford Park and Priorslee is via a ramp leading directly from the station approach as shown on the 'Existing Access Routes to Be Removed' Plan. Two routes lead to the bridge from Central Park, running either side of the A442. Access to the bridge from both paths is via steps on the north west side or a ramp on the south-east side. Whilst the existing bridge is used by people in wheelchairs and mobility vehicles as well as by people pushing buggies and pushchairs, the gradients in the existing ramps exceed that which is currently required to make the structure Equalities Act compliant.
- 6.4.6 The proposed bridge will continue to provide level access from the Town Centre at the south west end and the proposed ramped access at the north east end will provide an Equalities Act compliant alternative to the current route. This will ensure continuous access is provided for the NCR 55 which crosses the bridge and will not disadvantage any user accessing the new structure from these points.
- 6.4.7 The provision of an Equalities Act compliant route from the Town Centre to Central Park will be established without using the new bridge, through the provision of a pelican crossing across Rampart Way, utilising a new footpath link from the south-west bridge approach. Access to Central Park can also be obtained via the bridge by using the path along the north-east side of the A442, using the flight of stairs or customer lift to be provided. To achieve an Equalities Act compliant route from Priorslee and Stafford Park to Central Park, users will need to cross the bridge and utilise the Silkin Way route described above. Whilst this route is slightly longer than the present route, this minor inconvenience is more than mitigated by that route being Equalities Act compliant whereas the existing ramp is not. These routes have been shown in the submitted plan reference EI277 – 101 Rev 0. Officers are therefore satisfied that suitable access options are available for wheelchair and mobility vehicle users, people pushing pushchairs and buggies using the PROW route between the Town Centre, Railway Station/Stafford Park/Priorslee and Central Park and that significant benefits are provided in the provision of a bridge facility with Equalities Act compliant route options.

- 6.4.8 The Council's Rights of Way Officer is therefore satisfied that the proposed new access provisions will provide an enhanced, or not substantially less convenient alternative, following the omission of the existing staircases and ramps currently available. As a result, it is not considered that users of the PROW would be unduly affected or disadvantaged as a result of the proposed amendments. The attached plan provides a visual overview of the current and proposed access provisions.
- 6.4.9 Access Arrangements at Railway Station: The omission of the access ramp linking the bridge with Platform 2 may give rise to more significant concerns for those rail passengers arriving at Platform 2 who are unable to use the staircase provided. The applicant states that the bridge lift will be available for use by all customers arriving at Platform 2. Officers have queried what contingency arrangements will be in place at those times when the lift is out of service. Discussions have taken place with the applicant to consider solutions and it has been suggested that provisions can be made to pick up passengers from Platform 2 using the proposed Grasscrete maintenance track. This track would primarily be intended for use by maintenance vehicles to access the bridge lift and would therefore be secured by bollards but could also be used as a means of providing vehicular access to Platform 2 should it be required in the event of lift failure or any emergency. The principle of the use of this track as an emergency access has been agreed in principle with the Highways Team, however, precise details of the layout and construction of the service track will need to be submitted as a condition of any permission granted.
- 6.4.10 It is acknowledged that the lift will be available as a suitable alternative to the flights of stairs provided to access the bridge deck from Platform 2. The applicant advises that the lifts could be available 24 hours a day, subject to final agreement with Network Rail and London Midland, although as a minimum the lifts will be operated on a 'first and last train basis' being operational before the first train of the day and operating after the final departure of the day from the station (currently 05.38 am first departure and 00.36pm last departure). A Management Plan will be put in place with Network Rail, detailing the arrangements for the routine and emergency operation of the lifts. This information has not been submitted with the application but will be requested as a condition should planning approval be granted.
- 6.4.11 On the understanding that alternative access arrangements can be agreed by condition and a suitable management plan can be agreed and secured with the operators of the station, officers are satisfied that the proposed access arrangements will be acceptable and the proposed development, as amended, will continue to provide an enhanced pedestrian link between Telford Central Station and Telford Town Centre, meeting the requirements of CTAAP Policy TC7.

6.5 Trees and Ecology Issues

- 6.5.1 The application has been accompanied by an Addendum to the original Environmental Report which considers the various environmental issues

associated with the proposed amendments. The report takes into consideration ecological impacts and the likely impact upon trees.

- 6.5.2 With regard to Trees, the report identifies that the amended scheme will involve a smaller footprint than the previous approval and would no longer require encroachment into areas of woodland to the north of the existing bridge. Overall, the proposal will involve the removal of less vegetation. It is noted, however, that the proposal will require an additional laydown area during the construction period to be situated to the north of the bridge, in between the A442 and railway line. Clearance of this area has already taken place under the supervision of the Councils Trees Officer and no objection is raised to the use of this area. Some of the areas no longer to be incorporated have already been cleared and these will be the subject of a replacement planting plan which is proposed as a mitigation measure in the addendum report and can be agreed as part of the Landscaping Scheme to be submitted.
- 6.5.3 With regard to ecological impacts, the Addendum Report concludes that proposed changes to the bridge design will not affect the results of the original ecological surveys or the minimal effects identified, other than the requirement to remove less vegetation. The Council's Planning Ecologist has inspected the Addendum report and is satisfied that the findings of the previous Ecological Surveys continue to apply and is satisfied that the additional 'laydown area' identified to the north of the bridge had been subject to relevant surveys before being cleared. On this basis, no objection is recommended, subject to conditions requiring further checks for Badgers prior to commencement and that site clearance takes place outside the bird nesting season. Conditions requiring an Ecological Method Statement, landscaping plan and external lighting plan are also required.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The amended proposals will not materially alter the appearance of the main bridge deck structure which remains as approved, and in visual terms, the omission of retaining structures and embankments will be of benefit to the overall design, reducing the scale and massing of the bridge approaches and maintaining the open aspect at the station.
- 7.2 In terms of access issues, officers are satisfied that users of the Public Rights of Way network will not be unduly disadvantaged by the proposal and that suitable contingency plans are in place to ensure that rail passengers will be catered for in the event that the Platform 2 lift is out of order. Subject to conditions securing maintenance arrangements and contingency plans with the station operators and owners and details of suitable emergency taxi pick-up areas being submitted, the proposed amendments to the ramps and approaches are considered acceptable.
- 7.3 The proposal raises no additional ecological issues and will no longer encroach into an area of woodland to the north of the Platform 1. An additional laydown area to the north of the bridge has been cleared under the supervision of the Councils Trees Officer and a replacement tree planting

scheme and landscaping scheme will be secured as a condition of the planning permission.

- 7.4 Overall, the proposed replacement footbridge continues to comply with local planning policy which seeks to enhance the quality of pedestrian and cycle links from the Town Centre to Telford Central Station. The design continues to be of a high quality, providing an iconic feature in a key gateway site and arrival point into the town centre. The existing bridge will remain open until the new bridge is brought into use thus ensuring continuous connectivity between the town centre and railway station during the construction period.
- 7.5 The proposal has been assessed against and is considered to comply with policies contained within the local development plan and national planning guidance and is recommended for approval.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is that **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the following conditions and informatives (with authority to finalise conditions and reasons for approval to be delegated to Development Management Service Delivery Manager):

Conditions

1. A04 Time limit
2. B149c Pre-commencement Badger Inspection
3. B010 Details of Materials
4. B029c Details of staircase, ramps, etc
5. B031 Emergency Access to platform 2
6. B049c Traffic Management Plan
7. B061 Surface Water Drainage
8. B121 Landscaping Design
9. B150 Construction Management Plan
10. B141 Ecological Method Statement
11. B145 External Lighting Strategy
12. Bcust Public Art details
13. Bcust Emergency Access Plan – Platform 2
14. Bcust Maintenance plan
15. C089c Tree Report Recommendations
16. Ccust Bridge removal
17. C38 Approved Plans

Informatives

- I11 Highways
- I25b Nesting Birds
- I40 Conditions
- I41 Reason for Grant
- RANPPF1 Approval - National Planning Policy Framework.