

TWC/2016/0641

Footbridge to Telford Central Railway Station, Telford, Shropshire
Erection of replacement footbridge following demolition and removal of existing
bridge structure together with associated level alterations, provision of retaining
structures and access alterations

APPLICANT

Telford and Wrekin Council, Dominic Proud

RECEIVED

16/08/2016

PARISH

Lawley and Overdale

WARD

Ketley and Overdale

OFFICER Steven Drury

1.0 PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This is a full application seeking 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 footbridge will replace the existing pedestrian footbridge linking Telford Central Railway Station with Ironmasters Way and the Town Centre to the west. The bridge will cross the existing railway line, the A442 and Rampart Way.
- 1.3 The proposed replacement bridge would be erected alongside the existing footbridge which would remain in operation until the new bridge is completed and brought into use.
- 1.4 The proposals seek to replace the existing footbridge which is in poor condition and thereby reduce future maintenance costs and liabilities while enhancing the structure as a gateway to Telford and contribute to the overall regeneration of the town centre. The project is part of the Telford Town Centre Connectivity Package which also seeks to maintain and upgrade Rampart Way (which the bridge crosses) and Hall Park Way.

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.

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 (NCN) 55.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 None

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Local Development Plan:

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

4.2 National Guidance:

4.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

5.1 Lawley & Overdale Parish Council: No comment

5.2 **Standard consultation responses**

5.2.1 Arboricultural: Support subject to conditions

Raises no objection but requests that removed trees are harvested into 4m lengths and delivered to TWC wood yard for future sale by TWC.

5.2.2 Highways: No objection

Advises that the footway/cycleway crossing the bridge as well as the approaches to the bridge (including steps and ramps) appear to be adopted. As such any adopted routes that are to be removed as a result of these proposals will require Stopping Up under S247 Planning Act (1990). Consequently any new bridge and footway/cycleway connections will need to be adopted under appropriate provisions of the Highway Act (1980). New (or temporary) connections will need to be available prior to any Stopping Up. The Applicant should liaise with the Council's Legal Services for advice and assistance in this regard.

5.2.3 Environmental Health (Pollution Control): No comment

5.2.4 Drainage: Support subject to conditions

Requests details of surface water drainage to be requested as a condition.

5.2.5 Ecology: Support subject to conditions

Raises no objection subject to conditions and informatives

5.2.6 Highways England: No objection

5.2.7 Network Rail: Comment

Makes comments in respect of bridge ownership (Two Party Over Bridge Ownership Agreement), over spanning rail sections to be subject to Network Rail Asset Protection and London Midland review and agreement, new lifts being subject to Network Rail and London Midland review, future ownership and maintenance responsibilities of new lifts to be discussed and agreed with Network Rail, London Midland and Telford Council, and all Network Rail associated cost will be fully recoverable from Telford Council subject to signature of appropriate Network Rail Agreement including Asset Protection Agreement.

5.2.8 Shropshire Wildlife Trust: No comment

5.3 **Neighbour consultation responses**

5.3.1 Two comments received from members of the public, one in support, one in objection.

5.3.2 One letter of support from a member of the public welcoming the principle of the development but raising concerns that the loss of the central ramp will require people to cross Rampart Way. Suggests a crossing is installed.

5.3.3 An objection has also been submitted by Pegasus Planning Group on behalf of Sheet Anchor Evolve, owners of Units 1 and 2, Rampart Way, raising the following concerns: -

- island site currently accessed via ramps from the footbridge
- noted that the new pedestrian bridge will no longer provide access to the east side of Rampart Way
- The supporting documents suggest the ramp is not regularly used, however, this is because Unit 1 (former Blockbuster) is currently vacant
- Client has secured a gym operator to occupy the unit (subject of TWC/2016/0617)
- Therefore request that the new bridge incorporates a ramped access to clients site. This will significantly enhance the offer of uses at the site and is expected to result in more people accessing the site on foot
- Paragraph 35 of the NPPF and Policy CS4 of the Telford Core Strategy (Dec 2007) priority should be given to pedestrian and cycle movements, and the removal of the existing link to the east of Rampart Way will discourage people from walking to the site

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,
- Design and Visual Impact
- Access and Highways Issues
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Trees and Ecology
- Other Matters

6.2 Principle of Development

6.2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the development plan consists of the Telford & Wrekin Core Strategy and the Central Telford Area Action Plan (CTAAP) together with saved policies within the Wrekin Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning consideration but is not development plan policy. The Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Submission Version) is the emerging local plan and whilst not yet adopted, it has been submitted for examination which is scheduled to take place late 2016 and advice contained in the NPPF states that weight may be given to relevant policies as a material planning consideration.

6.2.2 Whilst the Core Strategy, saved Wrekin Local Plan and emerging Local provide more general borough-wide policies, CTAAP relates specifically to Telford Town Centre. Policy TC7 requires that development proposals in the Telford Gateway area (where the site is located) contribute towards improving

pedestrian and cycle links between the railway station and existing shopping area and from Central Park to the Town Centre. The development will help to meet these aims through the provision of a new, enhanced footbridge facility together with improved access points, ramps and lifts which link the railway station with Ironmasters Way, thus meeting the aims of that policy. More specific policies within CTAAP require a consideration of the impacts upon the pedestrian and cycle network (CT13), design issues (CT15), public realm (CT17), biodiversity (CT19) and landscape (CT20) and these issues will be considered later in the report.

- 6.2.3 Whilst no other planning policies relate specifically to the footbridge concerned, in more general policy terms, Core Strategy Policy CS3 confirms Telford will be the focus for spatial development within the borough and CS4 identifies the Central Telford area as the focus for major housing, employment, retail, recreation, leisure, service and mixed-use development serving the needs of the borough and sub-region. CS4 also confirms the role of Central Telford will be consolidated and enhanced by, amongst other things, making Central Telford an easier, safer and more pleasant place in which to walk by reducing the need for and impact of car use and providing more public transport links. Similarly, Policy EC5 of the emerging Telford and Wrekin Local Plan also concerns development within Telford Town Centre, again confirming development will be supported which reinforces Telford Town Centre's role as a sub-regional shopping centre. It advises that the Council will work with partners to improve the connectivity to and from Telford Town Centre.
- 6.2.4 Given that the proposal seeks to improve connectivity to and from the town centre from the railway station, it is considered the principal of the development is acceptable, subject to consideration of more detailed technical issues such as design and visual impact, access, trees and ecology which will take place in the following sections.

6.3 Design and Visual Impact

- 6.3.1 The proposals seek to replace the existing footbridge which is in poor condition and thereby reduce future maintenance costs and liabilities while enhancing the structure as a gateway to Telford and contribute to the overall regeneration of the town centre. In reaching the proposed design, a number of bridge types, positions and alignments have been considered and discounted for a variety of reasons including cost, practicality and design.
- 6.3.2 The proposed bridge has essentially been separated into two parts, comprising a shorter bridge spanning the railway line and a longer bridge spanning the A442 and widened Rampart Way. Both bridges will adjoin a central landing area. Access at the north east (station) side will be enhanced in the form of lifts from both platforms, fully DDA compliant ramps and steps and as at present, the south west side will connect seamlessly to the existing footpath linking with Ironmasters Way. Both bridges will have curved roofs comprising welded steel tubes covered with a stretched fabric/PVC membrane of a colour to be determined. The sides will be enclosed with 3

metre high glass panels and the soffit of the roof truss will be finished with white Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) panels. Abutments at each end of the bridge will be faced in coloured concrete blocks to match the retaining walls supporting the access ramps either side of the railway line. The central landing area and access ramps will be provided on raised ground between the railway land and the A442. The lift shafts will primarily be of glass construction, comprising a glass lift within an external glass box, framed with steel for structural stability.

- 6.3.3 The colour of the tensioned material roof covering the bridge has yet to be agreed although the architect recommends a silvery grey as a white colour is likely to show up dirt and algae staining. This matter can be dealt with via a condition of any planning approval.
- 6.3.4 The proposed bridge has been detailed to provide a unique design concept as something to be remembered by visitors to the town. By introducing two shorter spans coming off a shared new central mound area, the otherwise long single 130 m journey has been split down into two shorter spans, with the span over the railway now promoted as being part of the railway and not necessarily part of the bridge journey. This gives a better sense of arrival at the station and helps integrate the railway bridge and its lifts with the station area, as opposed to being a separate part of the bridge.
- 6.3.5 The design is envisaged as a transparent, open and safe route between the station and the centre of Telford. The bridge decks will be provided in a non-slip waterproof coating to be applied onto the concrete deck, in a colour to be agreed. The proposed design allows good natural light onto the footbridge during daylight hours so, and will not therefore require lighting during daylight hours, however, a photocell will be added (triggered at a specific lux level) so that illumination could be provided on dull dark winter days when light levels are poor.
- 6.3.6 A key requirement of the brief is to reduce the maintenance burden of the bridge structures. It is proposed, therefore, to enclose the main steel bridge trusses in a PVC tensile fabric covering that will protect the steel from the elements and reduce the requirement for repainting. An internal walkway, or possibly an access grid, will enable the structure to be inspected from within the shelter of the tensile covering. The painted steel truss roof will then be protected in this enclosure thereby extending its life and minimising the required maintenance frequency.
- 6.3.6 External Lighting: A key element of the scheme is to incorporate an external lighting scheme which will enhance the design, creating a landmark feature within the local area. The curving tensile-clad canopies, and the light GRP soffit, create the opportunity for a variety of creative lighting effects such as lighting the entire canopy, spotlighting key features or introducing changes in the colour of light. In this way, the entire redevelopment - the bridges, the ramps and landscaped mounds, can become a unique, exciting and significant local landmark. Indeed this formed part of the pre-application

discussions and the opportunities for external lighting were one of the reasons for selecting this particular bridge design.

- 6.3.7 An external lighting scheme has been submitted with the application which indicates that the canopy of the bridge will be washed with compact red/green/blue (RGB) changing lights, for a dynamic warm to cool colour effect. The material and colour of the canopy will determine which colour is most appropriate. The canopy lighting has been designed to light from the outside with fittings mounted to the external structure. Consideration needs to be given to maintenance and minimisation of upward light pollution, however, the Underscore InOut product proposed does not project light, and in this sense will describe the line of architecture without the upward loss of light.
- 6.3.8 Internally, the bridge walkway will be illuminated at floor and ceiling level and the entrance will have wall mounted up-lighting fittings installed. Low level lighting of the approach ramps, stairways and footpaths is proposed together with LED handrails which provide good uniform light onto the stairways. Approach ramps and footpaths will be lit with low level lighting within the knee rails or walls.
- 6.3.9 Whilst the indicated lighting scheme is considered appropriate, this will be subject to a condition which will require agreement of a detailed lighting scheme.
- 6.3.10 Security and Surveillance: The bridge has been designed to be safe, welcoming and to avoid unlit or poorly visible 'hiding' places' where anti-social behaviour could occur. Good visibility will be maintained along the route which will be open and well-lit and CCTV is not currently proposed but could be retro-fitted if recurring problems arise.
- 6.3.11 Landscaping: Appropriate landscaping of the development will help to integrate the proposed bridge structure into the existing urban environment and will assist in making the route more legible for users and the aim of achieving a gateway to Telford Town Centre. Landscaping mitigation proposals have been provided within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which propose the provision of landscaped earthworks alongside ramps and supports to soften the appearance of what would otherwise be significant, elevated structures, public realm enhancement works will be carried out around the bridge and a replacement woodland planted where trees need to be lost to accommodate the new ramp and walkway at the north east side of the bridge. Given the requirement to provide a gateway feature, it is proposed to maintain a generally more open aspect, avoiding screen planting, however, grouped tree planting and perennial wildflower planting is proposed in areas where filtered views are required. A detailed landscaping plan has not been submitted with the application and can be requested as a condition of the planning permission.
- 6.3.12 Having regard to the above considerations, officers are of the opinion that the proposed design will be of the quality required in this key, gateway location and arrival point into the town centre. The proposal will respond positively to

context and will be appropriate in terms of scale, massing, form orientation and layout and will incorporate landscaping and external lighting schemes which will complement and enhance the structure, creating an iconic feature within the town centre. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with design based policies UD2, UD3 in the Saved Wrekin Local Plan, Core Strategy Policy CS15, CTAAP Policy CT15 and emerging T&WLP Policy BE1, together with landscape based policies UD4 in the Wrekin Local Plan, CS12 in the Core Strategy and CTAAP Policy CT20.

6.4 Access Issues

- 6.4.1 A primary aim of the proposal is to improve the quality of the footpath connection between Telford Central Railway Station and Telford Town Centre. The previous section has considered how the design aims to enhance the journey in a visual sense, however, the development also seeks to improve the physical journey pedestrians must undertake.
- 6.4.2 From Ironmasters Way, the bridge will involve level access from a new enlarged landing area which will contain enhanced public realm and landscaping to improve the quality of the space. On the railway station side, the bridge will be accessed via lifts, DDA compliant ramps or steps from platforms either side of the railway line. The bridge deck on the railway station side has been raised by 2.3m in order to allow clearance required for the future electrification of the railway line. Ramps will now be DDA compliant at a gradient of 1:20, to provide access for disabled people, wheelchair users, pushchairs, cyclists etc. However, it is anticipated that the new 16 person capacity lifts will normally be utilised to access the bridge for the less mobile.
- 6.4.3 The bridge also forms part of the National Cycle Route 55 and therefore needs to continue to provide good access to cyclists using this route. The gentle ramp at the Railway Station side will link in with the cycle route which extends along the side and rear of the station car park, although cyclists will be required to dismount before travelling across the bridge.
- 6.4.4 The bridge deck has been designed to provide a light but sheltered journey whereby pedestrians will be protected from the elements by toughened laminated glass along the sides. This will also help to improve the experience of the journey across the bridge which at present is considered to be poor.

6.5 Flood Risk and Drainage

In order to address any surface water drainage issues, the proposal will need to incorporate an integrated drainage system to capture and convey runoff from the ramps, roof and the entrances of the lifts to existing surface water infrastructure. Detailed design would be undertaken in line with Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDs) principles. Opportunities would be sought to attenuate flows in order to provide a degree of betterment over the existing situation by reducing peak flows from the site by 50%. The system would need to be provided in a manner that does not detract from the high quality design. A detailed surface water drainage scheme has not been provided to

date and will need to be requested as a condition of any planning permission granted.

6.6 Trees and Ecology

6.6.1 The proposed development will require the loss of a substantial number of trees currently located in the woodland area to the north west of the station. The loss of the trees is required to accommodate the access ramp at the north eastern side of the bridge which requires additional space due to the increased height of the bridge and the requirement to provide a DDA compliant ramp. Whilst the trees in this area are not protected, they are considered to be of amenity value and do provide an important function in providing a visual and acoustic barrier from the M54. However, not all trees are to be removed and a replacement planting scheme is proposed which will offset some of this loss. The Council's Trees Officer raises no objection to the proposed development and on this basis, the proposal is considered acceptable, subject to a condition requiring the submission of a landscaping plan.

6.6.2 The application has been accompanied by an extended Phase 1 habitat Survey which includes assessments of bat and badger potential and the likely impact of external lighting concept plans. The report found that the area surrounding the site including the existing bridge structure had negligible potential for roosting bats, Great Crested Newts and reptiles. Further checks for Badgers will be required prior to commencement of the development and it is recommended that site clearance takes place outside the bird nesting season. No objections are raised by the Councils Planning Ecologist subject to the attachment of conditions requiring an Ecological Method Statement, landscaping plan, external lighting plan and Badger inspection prior to commencement.

6.7 Construction Issues

6.7.1 The proposed development is significantly constrained by the fact that it crosses a busy railway line, the A442 and the soon to be dual-carriageway Rampart Way, therefore construction needs to ensure the minimum of disruption to both road and rail networks. In addition, it is a core objective of the proposal that the existing bridge remains in use to carry pedestrians whilst the proposed bridge is under construction to ensure connection is maintained between the town centre and the station.

6.7.2 The proposed bridge will be constructed alongside the existing which will therefore remain in use until the new bridge has been completed. This will ensure that full pedestrian links between the town centre and railway station remain.

6.7.3 The erection of the main bridge will be a major piece of construction work and will require extensive coordination of traffic management involving lane width reductions and road closures. The bridge will arrive on-site in sections and will require pre-assembly and welding before being lifted into place by crane. It is

likely that a 2 week closure of the northbound A442 will be required at this stage and the application includes a traffic management drawing showing how this would be dealt with in terms of alternative routes.

- 6.7.4 The erection of the bridge over the railway line needs to be co-ordinated with Network Rail and would normally take place at weekend nights. It is anticipated that the railway bridge lift could take place within one of these time slots to avoid exceptional closure which would disrupt rail operations and would require prior booking which could hold up the delivery framework.
- 6.7.5 Demolition of the existing bridge will also be done by crane and would require road closures on both sides of the A442 and on Rampart Way. These are anticipated to be night-time closures, and are likely to take place at the end of the construction period in February or March 2018. The submitted traffic management plan also shows how alternative routes will be provided and will be controlled by condition.
- 6.7.6 Whilst the construction process may result in some disruption to the highway network, this is likely to be short term and temporary in nature and will occur on a local scale. The submitted traffic management plan indicates satisfactory alternative routes, however, this will be dealt with in more detail by the Highways Network Management team who have been involved at the pre-application stage and are ultimately responsible for traffic management, road closures and diversions.

6.8 **Other Matters**

- 6.8.1 Management and Maintenance: It is anticipated that ownership and maintenance of the bridge will remain with the Council, however, the lifts and motors will be transferred to Network Rail who will then operate and maintain them in accordance with their agreements with the station operator (currently London Midland).
- 6.8.2 Public Art: The opportunity exists for the provision of public art at several points along the bridge structure including the landing areas at the Ironmasters Way end in the centre between the two bridges. Such public art could highlight Telford's history and development. Such artwork could be requested and controlled as a condition of the planning permission with content and delivery to be agreed with the Councils Arts and Culture Manager.
- 6.8.3 Public Comments: Concerns have been raised by the owner of the Units 1 and 2, Rampart Way (Staples and former Blockbuster units) that it will become difficult for customers arriving at the train station to access as the proposed replacement bridge no longer contains an access ramp or staircase providing access to the land in between the A442 and Rampart Way. This is of particular concern given that a new tenant is due to occupy Unit 1, subject to planning approval for a change of use to a gym being obtained (currently under consideration). Whilst officers note these concerns, the scheme has been designed to allow access to the island site, albeit via a new footpath link to be provided from the landing area at the Ironmasters Way end of the

bridge. A pedestrian crossing will then be made available across the newly-provided dual carriageway on Rampart Way and this route would only involve a marginally longer walk/cycle than currently exists. The difference being that the proposed route would be DDA compliant which the current ramp is not. It is therefore considered that the proposal would satisfy requirements in terms of the NPPF and local development plan and officers do not feel that a refusal could be substantiated on these grounds.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development seeks to provide a replacement footbridge between Telford Central Railway Station and Ironmasters Way, replacing the existing footbridge and providing an enhanced pedestrian route to Telford Town Centre. The development also seeks to reduce future maintenance costs and liabilities while enhancing the structure as a gateway to Telford and contributing to the overall regeneration of the town centre. The replacement bridge is also required to eliminate the risk of a vehicle collision with the central pier within the A442 and to reduce existing maintenance liabilities
- 7.2 The proposed replacement footbridge complies 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 is considered to be of high quality and will provide an iconic feature in a key gateway site and arrival point into the town centre. The proposal will respond positively to context and will be enhanced through a dynamic external lighting scheme which will illuminate the bridge at night. A sensitive landscaping scheme will be provided to soften its impact within the surrounding environment.
- 7.3 The existing bridge will remain open until the new bridge is brought into use and access from the station will be obtained by lift, ramp or staircase. Seamless links to the National Cycle Route 55 will also be provided. The bridge has been designed to provide an open and safe pedestrian route allowing good natural light to enter and avoiding unlit or poorly visible spots for anti-social behaviour.
- 7.4 Some disruption to the highways network is likely to occur during the construction period, however, a transport management strategy has been submitted which provides alternative routes and is considered acceptable in principle subject to finalisation with the Councils Network Management Team. The proposal raises no technical highways objections and would not result in any severe adverse impacts upon highway or pedestrian safety.
- 7.6 The proposal raises no flood risk, drainage or ecology issues. There is the potential to provide public art at various points along the bridge, details of which could be requested and controlled through a condition attached to the planning permission.
- 7.7 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. B061 Foul and Surface Water
5. B121 Landscaping Design
6. B049c Traffic Management Plan
7. B150 S.E.M.P
8. B141 Ecological Method Statement
9. B145 External Lighting Strategy
10. C38 Approved Plans

Informatives

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