

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** North Warwickshire Area Committee

**Date of Committee** 11th July 2007

**Report Title** C7/01 Station Road Rail Bridge, Polesworth – Road Over Rail Safety Scheme

**Summary** This report informs Members of the safety issues concerning this bridge and proposes options for highway vehicle containment to address those issues.

**For further information please contact** Stephen O'Connor  
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**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?** Yes/No

**Background Papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-** *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees  .....
- Local Member(s)  Councillor M Stanley – welcomes investigation of High Street route but very concerned about restrictions caused by illegal parking and a lack of enforcement.  
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
- Other Elected Members  .....
- Cabinet Member  .....  
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  I Marriott – agreed.
- Finance  .....

- Other Chief Officers  .....
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  Discussed at Parish Council 4th April 2007.

**FINAL DECISION**                      **YES/NO**      (*If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps*)

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :**

*Details to be specified*

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  6th September 2007.
- To an O & S Committee  .....
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

## North Warwickshire Area Committee - 11th July 2007

### C7/01 Station Road Rail Bridge, Polesworth - Road Over Rail Safety Scheme

#### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy

#### Recommendation

That subject to the safety issues of the alternative High Street route being resolved, Committee approves the proposals for a continuous safety barrier on the approaches and on Station Road Bridge with single way traffic controlled by traffic signals.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Station Road Rail Bridge carries the C7 over the West Coast Main Line near Polesworth Station. Its location is shown on the plan attached as **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 The bridge is owned by Network Rail and has three spans, constructed with pre-cast concrete beams. It was originally built in 1845 but when the line was electrified in 1960 a new deck was constructed to give greater clearance.
- 1.3 A recent appraisal and risk ranking of the steep approaches to the bridge has shown that there is a very significant risk of vehicles leaving the road and travelling onto the railway track. It is the fourth most at risk site in the County. In this instance, there is a 50:50 cost sharing agreement between the County Council and Network Rail to address the problem by the introduction of vehicle containment measures on the approaches.
- 1.4 Additionally, assessment of the bridge has shown that although the carriageway is suitable for normal highway loading (40 tonnes), the edges are weak with a rated capacity of 25 tonnes and the existing brick parapets do not conform to current standards. It should be noted that Network Rail does not have a legal responsibility to address these deficiencies.

#### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 The County Council proposed a scheme to provide safety barriers on the approaches and to continue the barriers across the bridge in order to protect the weak edges and the substandard parapets. In order to accommodate the barriers and sufficient clearance from the parapets, it would be necessary to narrow the road to single lane across the bridge and provide traffic signals. It

was also proposed to extend the current 30 mph speed restriction to include the bridge.

- 2.2 The proposed scheme was approved by Network Rail and by the Council's Safety Audit Team and an exhibition was mounted at Polesworth Library to seek the views of local people. Local farmers were also contacted directly.
- 2.3 Officers attended the Parish Council meeting to discuss the issues and strong objections to the scheme were raised by local farmers. Their view was that the scheme would prevent large and wide farm machinery from crossing the bridge and would require vehicles to be diverted via High Street. Although the diversion length would not be excessive, they felt that this route was less suitable because of parked vehicles, traffic calming and greater numbers of pedestrians, including schoolchildren. The proposed extension of the speed restriction was welcomed.
- 2.4 The usage of the existing bridge by the large farming machines is seasonal. The volume and times when large vehicles travel are: 2-4 vehicles per week during March–May and two vehicles per week during July–September. Movements are sometimes carried out at night. This information was provided by the main operator and there may be other movements.
- 2.5 Officers agreed to re-examine the scheme in the light of these comments.

### **3. Options**

- 3.1 Reconstruction of the bridge to current standards would be prohibitively expensive (in excess of £2 million) and as such is not being considered.
- 3.2 The farmers' preferred option would be to install traffic signals as proposed and provide safety barriers on the approaches but not over the bridge itself. It was suggested that white lines could be added to the bridge to discourage vehicles from straying to the edges. This, however, would not address the weak edges or substandard parapets, although it would not require large vehicles to be diverted via High Street. It would also require additional substantial structural works to anchor the ends of the safety barrier adjacent to the railway and may not be approved by Network Rail. It would also provide no protection for pedestrians.
- 3.3 The originally proposed scheme as outlined in paragraph 2.1 remains an option.
- 3.4 None of the options will affect the discussions that are ongoing with Network Rail regarding a possible new access to the southbound platforms at Polesworth Station.

## **4. Recommendation**

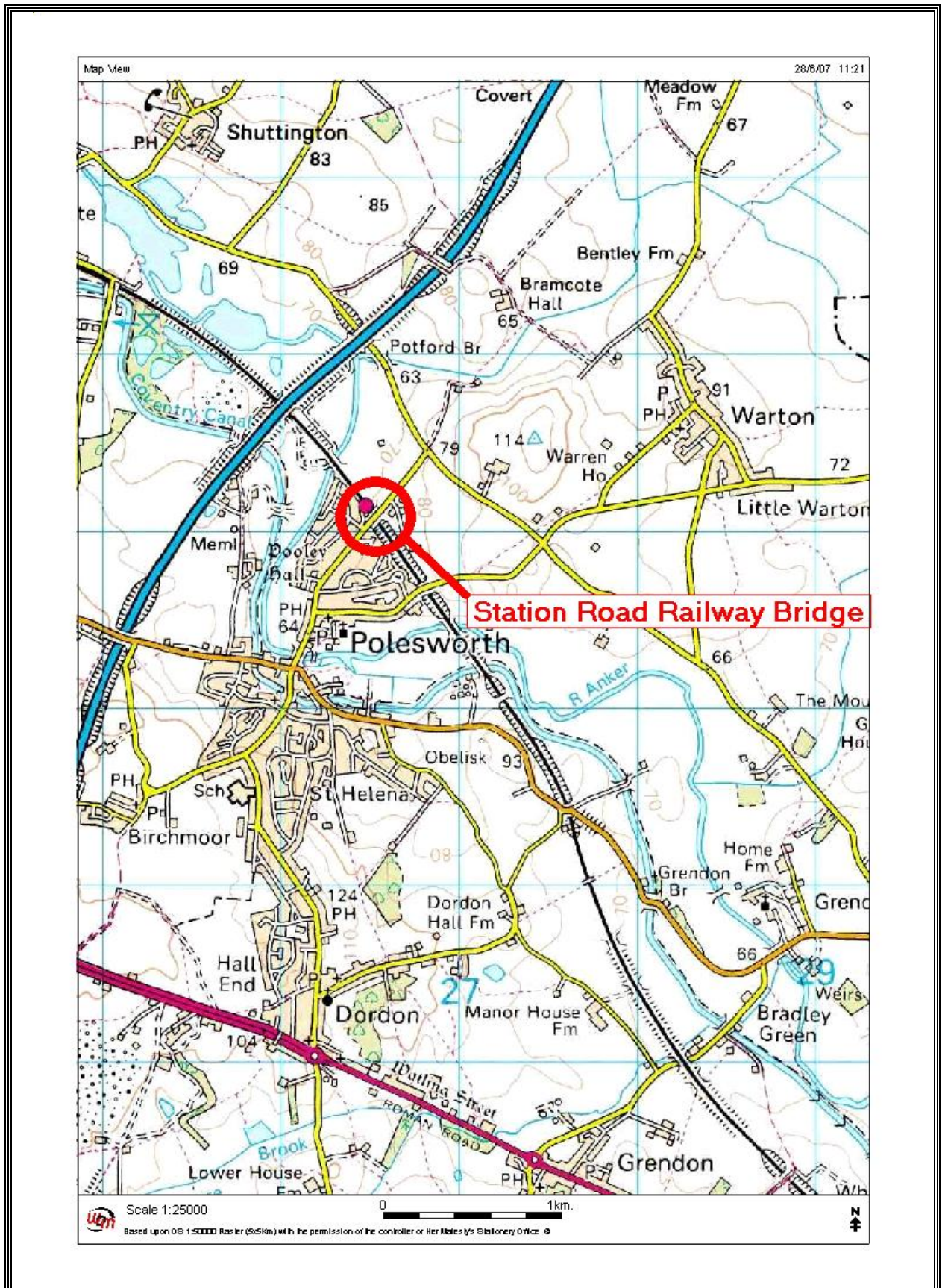
- 4.1 In view of the all the factors above and in particular the numbers of large vehicles potentially diverted, it is considered that on balance the originally proposed scheme as outlined in paragraph 2.1 is the preferable option. This would be conditional on the route via High Street being assessed as acceptably safe for abnormal vehicles. The assessment could include measures for controlling illegal parking and re-siting of street furniture. It may also include a physical trial of a large vehicle movement, in conjunction with the operators to gain information on potential problems.

JOHN DEEGAN  
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy  
Shire Hall  
Warwick

22nd June 2007

*North Warwickshire Area Committee of 11 July 2007*

**C7/01 Station Road Rail Bridge, Polesworth – Road Over Rail Safety Scheme**



**SITE LOCATION PLAN**

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