

- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Public Transport Group.

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

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council Full Council 21 October 2008.
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**Stratford on Avon East Joint Committee -
16 September 2008**

B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge

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

Recommendation

That Full Council is asked to authorise the introduction of a 7.5T permanent weight restriction on the bridge with limited exemptions as detailed. Further investigations should be carried out into bus service issues and traffic signing in the area.

1. Background

- 1.1 Harbury Station Bridge is a four span bridge which carries the B4451 over the Didcot to Chester railway line. The bridge is owned by Network Rail and was constructed in about 1895. It was assessed in June 2000 and it was found that although the main carriageway had a capacity of 40 tonnes, the footways were only suitable for 7.5 tonnes and the parapets were not to current standards. A location plan is included in **Appendix A – The Consultation Document**.
- 1.2 Network Rail does not have a legal responsibility for verge strengths or parapets to current standards whereas the County Council has to consider the possibility of a large vehicle straying from the carriageway and overloading the footway.
- 1.3 At the Stratford Area Committee meeting on 23 November 2005 the proposal to protect the weak edges of the bridge by the provision of high kerbs and traffic signals was approved.
- 1.4 A contract was prepared for the works and this was put out to tender, with the intention of starting work early in 2007. However, before the tender was awarded, local residents and parish councils expressed concern that they had not been sufficiently informed of the proposals. The scheme was therefore put on hold to allow further discussion.
- 1.5 Following extensive discussion with local residents and stakeholders, including a number of public meetings, it was clear that some local parish councils and a number of local residents were opposed to the proposed scheme and would prefer the imposition of a weight restriction.

- 1.6 There was a concern that the delay to implementing a permanent scheme exposed the County Council to an unacceptable risk should a large vehicle stray from the carriageway. It was therefore proposed to impose a temporary weight restriction on the bridge at the earliest possible opportunity. This was approved by Area Committee on 16 May 2007 and following further discussions with local residents regarding possible exemptions and diversion signs, the restriction was introduced on 1 September 2007.
- 1.7 Temporary weight restrictions can legally remain in force for a maximum period of 18 months. They cannot be renewed and must be made permanent or removed after this time.
- 1.8 The effect of the temporary weight restriction has been monitored by traffic counts undertaken both by local residents and by the County Council, before and after the restriction was introduced. Very significant reductions in the number of heavy vehicles have been recorded in both cases.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1 A permanent solution to safeguard the weak parapets and edges on Harbury Station Bridge needs to be implemented within 18 months of the introduction of the temporary weight restriction.
- 2.2 In addition to a number of meetings and extensive correspondence, a formal consultation was carried out in Spring 2008. The closing date for responses was extended to allow parish councils to consider the issues at their meetings.
- 2.3 The consultation asked respondents to consider three options.
 - (i) To make the temporary weight restriction permanent
 - (ii) To revert to the original scheme with road narrowing and traffic signals
 - (iii) To construct a new footbridge to allow room for edge protection on the existing bridge and allow two way traffic flow.
- 2.4 A copy of the consultation document is attached as **Appendix A** and a summary of the responses is attached as **Appendix B**.

3. Consultation Results

- 3.1 The majority of the responses (76%) were in favour of the permanent weight limit option. The main concerns expressed were:
 - (i) The impact on bus services
 - (ii) The impact on movement of farm vehicles
 - (iii) Problems with speeding vehicles
 - (iv) A need to improve traffic signs

3.2 **Bus Issues**

- (i) There is an hourly bus service, linking Leamington, Southam and Rugby which used to cross the bridge but is unable to since the imposition of the temporary weight restriction. The effect of this is that the residents of the Deppers Bridge Area have to walk to the Great Western Hotel to catch the bus. This can be a distance of the order of 1km and can be difficult for elderly residents. There is a Flexibus service which is more convenient but this is only twice weekly.
- (ii) Options for using smaller buses are limited because of the numbers of passengers and there would be financial implications for increasing the numbers of buses or altering schedules.
- (iii) School children from Deppers Bridge now have to use a separate school minibus to remove the need for them to walk to the Great Western.

3.3 **Farm Vehicles** - Local farmers have requested exemptions for different types of heavy vehicles. It was agreed by Cabinet when the temporary weight restriction was discussed that the only acceptable exemptions would be for combine harvesters working in fields adjacent to the bridge. Further exemptions would result in unacceptable risks for the safety of the bridge.

3.4 **Speeding Vehicles and Traffic Signing** - Local residents have queried the general speed of vehicles in the area and the adequacy of advance signing for the weight restriction. Signing is being reviewed by the County Council Traffic Section.

4. **County Council Implications**

4.1 A permanent weight restriction would be contrary to County Council policy as stated in the Local Transport Plan. The LTP wording is:-

Weight Restrictions - Our aim is to ensure that all bridges on the road network are capable of carrying 40 tonne vehicles. We avoid the imposition of weight limits wherever possible. A weight limit is generally only considered appropriate if a bridge is located:

- (i) On a minor road where a suitable alternative route is reasonably convenient (5km or less); or
- (ii) On a minor road where a suitable alternative route is longer than 5km but the numbers of HGVs affected are less than 10 in a 12-hour day.

4.2 In this instance, the maximum possible diversion route (measured from one side of the bridge to the other) is 9.5km.

4.3 If this committee supports the proposal for a permanent weight restriction then it will be necessary to seek approval from Full Council as the decision would be contrary to policy.

- 4.4 It is proposed to install safety barriers on the approaches to the bridge as part of a larger countywide programme to address issues of possible vehicle incursion onto the railway. This work will proceed in addition to the chosen solution for the bridge.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 In view of the levels of support expressed, it is recommended that the existing temporary weight limit be made permanent.
- 5.2 As explained in previous committee reports it is recommended that the only exemptions allowed should be for combine harvesters serving local farms.
- 5.3 It is recommended that bus provision should be further investigated to see if any improvements are possible.
- 5.4 The County Council Traffic Section will continue to monitor the effectiveness of local traffic signs. Some improvements to the signing have already been made.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of introducing the permanent weight restriction will be of the order of £5000 and will be funded from the Bridge Maintenance Capital Budget.
- 6.2 As mentioned in 4.2 above, it is also proposed to install safety fencing on the bridge approaches and the cost of this will be in the region of £30,000, again funded from the Bridge Maintenance Capital Budget.

PAUL GALLAND
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy
Shire Hall
Warwick

2 September 2008

**Stratford on Avon East Joint Committee -
16 September 2008**

B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge Consultation

1. Background

- 1.1 Harbury Station Bridge is a four span bridge which carries the B4451 over the Didcot to Chester railway line (the location is shown in Appendix A). The bridge is owned by Network Rail and was constructed in about 1895. It was assessed in June 2000 and it was found that although the main carriageway had a capacity of 40Tonnes, the footways were only suitable for 7.5Tonnes and the parapets were not to current standards.
- 1.2 Network Rail does not have a legal responsibility for verge strengths or parapets to current standards whereas the County Council has to consider the possibility of a large vehicle straying from the carriageway and overloading the footway.

2. Brief History

- 2.1 In late 2006, a contract was put out to tender to protect the edges of the bridge using high kerbs and to restrict the traffic to single lane by the installation of traffic signals.
- 2.2 Local residents and parish councils expressed concern that they had not been sufficiently informed of the proposals and the scheme was put on hold.
- 2.3 Following very extensive discussions and public meetings, there was no clear consensus of opinion and it was agreed that a temporary 7.5T weight restriction should be introduced to protect the bridge until a permanent solution could be agreed. The weight restriction was put in place on 1 September 2007.
- 2.4 Following requests from local farmers, it was agreed that very limited exemptions for combine harvesters would be allowed.

3. Current Situation

- 3.1 The temporary weight restriction is allowed to remain in force for eighteen months and it is the intention to implement a permanent solution within this period.
- 3.2 Traffic counts have been carried out by local residents and by the County Council and it appears that there is significant abuse of the restriction. Details of the counts are provided in Appendices B and C.

4. Road over Rail Safety

- 4.1 In a risk ranking of all road over railway bridge sites in Warwickshire Harbury Station Bridge scored 104 which positioned it in the top 10 on the priority list.

- 4.2 In order to mitigate the risk of errant vehicles reaching the railway infrastructure, positive road vehicle restraint barriers on the approaches to the bridge are considered necessary.
- 4.3 Which ever of the following 3 options proves to be the preferred solution an arrangement of vehicle safety barrier will be required on the approaches to the bridge.

5. Traffic Count Results Analysis

- 5.1 The average recorded traffic count between 1/7/2007 and 16/7/07 for Monday to Friday flows established the number of HGV in both directions crossing the bridge was 226 over a period of 12 hours (07:00-19:00). The follow up traffic count on 08/04/2008 recorded 107 HGVs in both directions crossing the bridge (07:00-19:00). A reduction of 53%.
- 5.2 The peak hour flows before and after the imposition of the weight limit obtained by WCC appear to correlate well with the Resident Group counts only if vehicle category 'Bin 5' is ignored. Please see "Vehicle Classification Table" in Appendix B. Flows do peak, however, significant vehicle movements (including HGVs) occur throughout the day.
- 5.3 The traffic counts do confirm a significant reduction in the number of HGV vehicles using Harbury Station Bridge. However, further measures are necessary to ensure greater compliance with the Weight Restriction and so provide adequate protection for the bridge.

6. Options for a Permanent Solution

- 6.1 Replacing the existing road bridge with a modern wider structure is prohibitive on cost for the foreseeable future.
- 6.2 The options available are:
- A Make the temporary weight restriction permanent.
 - B Revert to the road narrowing with traffic signals scheme.
 - C Construct a new footbridge to allow room for edge protection on the existing bridge and retain two way traffic flow.

Note: All options will require vehicle barriers on the bridge approaches.

- 6.3 The estimated costs of the above schemes are:
- A £35,000
 - B £190,000
 - C £680,000

7. Your Views

- 7.1 Warwickshire County Council would welcome your views on the options and your preferred option.
- 7.2 Please let us have your response by Monday 23 June 2008.
- 7.3 Comments received will inform a decision to be made by Cabinet.
- 7.4 Please contact WCC Design Services/Bridge Maintenance if you require any further information or clarification.

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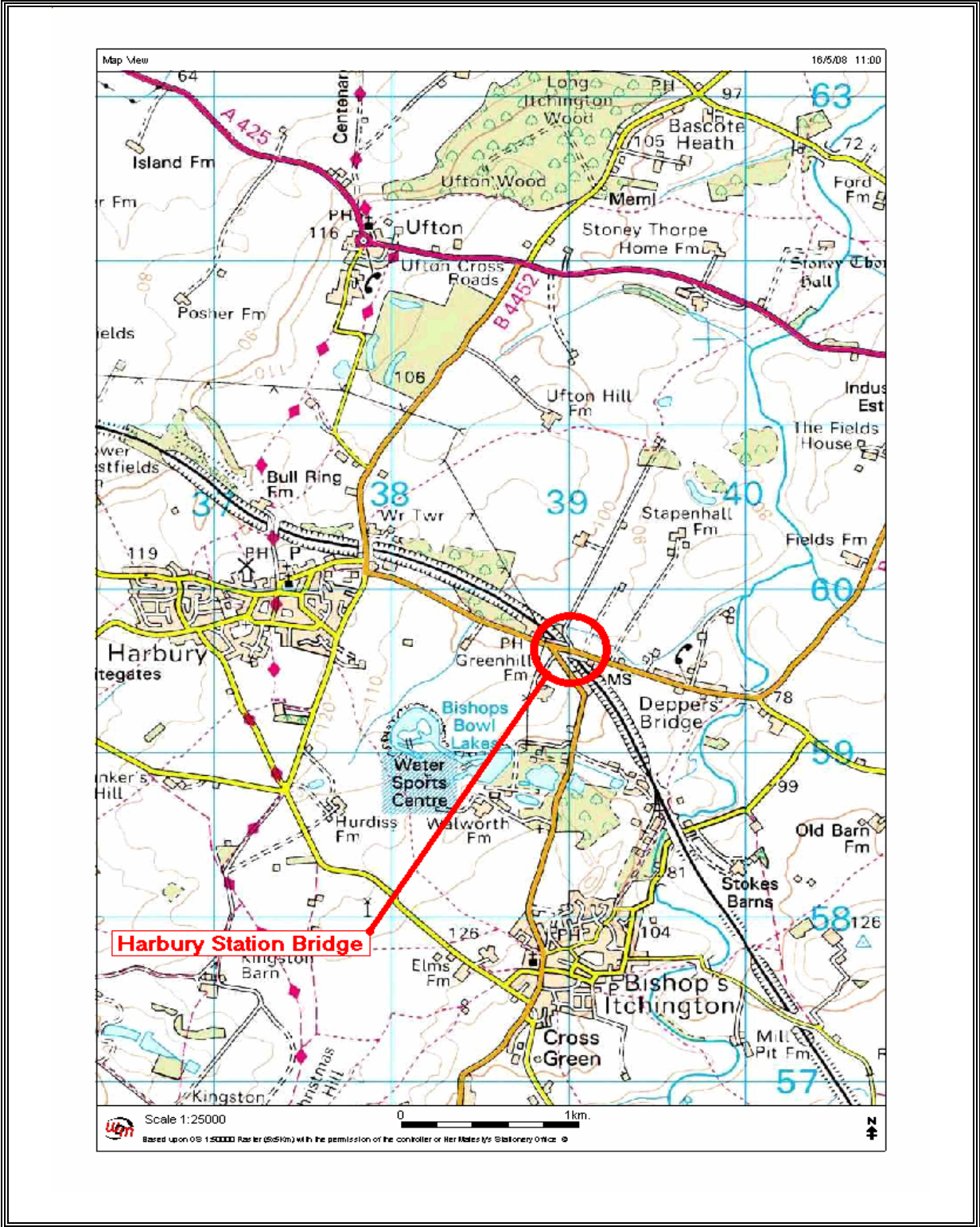
(01926) 412089

Appendices

- A Location Plan
- B WCC Traffic Count Results: 1-16 July 2007 and 8 April 2008
- C Residents Traffic Figures: October 2007 to January 2008

Note The detailed traffic figures (Appendices B and C) are omitted from the copy of the consultation document provided to Stratford on Avon Joint Committee-East for brevity.

B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge Consultation



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B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge Consultation - Support Expressed

Option A: Make the temporary weight restriction permanent	
	Comments
Councillors	
County Councillor Bob Stevens	- Bus issues, More traffic signs
District Councillor Andrew Patrick	
District Councillor Bev Mann	- More traffic signs
Parish Councils	
Harbury	- Bus issues
Bishops Itchington	- Increased traffic on minor roads
Ladbroke	
Residents	
Howell P Merchant (GR Co Ltd)	
Mr Dave & Mrs Malin (DBC)	- Bus issues
Mr & Mrs Nash	- Property access safety
P Crowley-Palmer	
Mr Ron Grey (Parish Cllr)	- Bus issues, More traffic signs
Mr R. Wright & Ms T. Gilbert	
Mrs E.M. Grey	- More traffic signs
Mr R. Donley	
Mr & Mrs Turner	- Bus issues, Farm traffic exemption
Debbie & Philip Went	- More traffic signs, Speed concerns
Mark Fletcher	- More traffic signs
Mr & Mrs R.A. Heath	- Speed concerns
Andy & Ginny Noble	
Nik Heelam	
Mr & Mrs Harris	- More traffic signs
John Wilkins	- Bus issues
Malcolm Draper	

Option B: Road Narrowing with Traffic Signals Scheme.	
	Comments
WCC Officers	
David Matthews (Transport Operations)	- Bus issues, No alternative smaller bus option due to capacity requirements
Farmers	
John Moore (Walworth Farm)	- Farm traffic exemption
Nick Moore (Eastfields Farm)	- Exemption or serious disruption
Residents	
C.R. McQuiston	- Bus issues
Mrs M. Cambray	- Bus issues

Option C: Construct a new footbridge to allow room for edge protection on the existing bridge and retain two way traffic flow	
	Comments
Businesses	
Follett Property Holdings Ltd, Mayer Brown Ltd (agents)	- Alternative route study required Planning conflict