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13/11/2018

Dear Mr Eden,

Thank you for your correspondence to date regarding the Friends of Lucy's Mill Foot Bridge (FLMFB) digital presentation pack submitted earlier this year. The delay in response beyond the intended September return has been due to a series of factors, including time to brief, subsequently collate and consider the views from Warwickshire County Council's elected members. Recent articles published in the Stratford Herald including those from concept project manager Mike Sheard and response from Dr Roy Lodge MBE, former Mayor for Stratford upon Avon on your concept design are also acknowledged and considered in this response.

Although a lack of interest and involvement by the local authority has been portrayed in the local media you will hopefully be aware of the County Council's role to date in providing what has been extensive feedback on both the strategic, technical and financial issues associated with FLMFB's concept design for DDA compliant ramps leading to the existing bridge deck. Officers on more than one occasion to date have liaised with both your project team and your predecessor as chair, at various stages.

On 24th August 2017 senior officers attended the premises of Stratford District Council to view your project team's initial presentation of concept. A feedback letter issued on the 13th September 2017 listed a brief two-part summary on the general commentary for 'refurbishing the existing bridge' including an annex of notes identifying further issues with the latest version of the ramp design. A copy of this feedback was sent to Stratford District Council, the concept project team, and your predecessor, the late Mrs Joan MacFarlane on 14th November 2017 including reason for declining invitation to attend FOLMB's Public Open Day, 2nd December of the same year. Officers from the County Council kindly



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declined invitation to this event in order to prevent the misconception that the local highway authority endorsed concept having previously summarised the need for a feasibility study to identify all viable options, consider Stratford upon Avon's pedestrian and cycling crossings of the River Avon, before the need to develop a business case to support the right conceptual design, at the right location.

Having reviewed the digital presentation pack submitted, the efforts of your team in securing additional 'site survey data' through undertaking pedestrian counts is acknowledged. A similar exercise was conducted by the Stratford Voice a number of years ago during the development of the World Class Stratford footbridge, to be sited near the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. This data in conjunction with the views of the authority's County Councillors that have been consulted reiterate the need to address and provide 'a feasible river crossing in Stratford upon Avon that is suitable for pedestrians and cyclists'. Unfortunately, your concept design for DDA compliant ramps on approach to the existing crossing at Lucy's Mill do not address the reservations shared to date, in particular concerns for the existing bridge structure, its foundations, a lack of consideration for the existing art-deco form i.e. the proposal to use non-complimentary steel piers and ramps (a kit form), as well as the evident risk that cyclists will traffic across the width restricted bridge deck with sub-standard parapet constraints, to name a few.

On the subject of funding the scheme, your project team's estimate of costs, circa £1 Million, which excludes professional fees and works to address the restrictions of the existing structure prove this is no small scale project in the making. This magnitude of cost, for a scheme which does not address all the problems in the making is considered to be somewhat flawed. It is most likely that the funding needed to address the remaining concerns after installation of DDA compliant ramps alone, make this project far more expensive than that being suggest.

The County Council's current view and position on Lucy's Mill Footbridge remains as that noted in Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 Part A, highlighted as follows;

- There would appear to be merit in upgrading the bridge to make it more accessible – the pedestrian surveys support this.
- The level of capital funding available for all transport projects is severely restricted – It is highly unlikely that the County Council's annual capital funding could be made available for either ramp provision or a new bridge and it would therefore be necessary to secure funding from an external source – including feasibility study.
- The likely costs and benefits of the scheme need to be evaluated against those for other competing transport schemes.
- There is potential for local objection preventing the public footpaths on either side of the bridge being upgraded to cycle track status.

Concerns regarding local objection are also applicable to the form of your concept ramps having closely monitored the range of feedback and comments submitted to the FLMFB social media page, when first showcased to the latter end of 2017, collated to date.

These observations although stated in the context of upgrading the existing structure apply equally to a new bridge intended for cycling. A feasibility study weighing renovation of existing bridge(s) versus the provision of a new crossing would address two main issues; (1) the possible provision of connecting cycle routes and possible upgrading of existing footpaths into shared pedestrian'/cycle routes (this would require significant consultation with local stakeholders) including demonstrating the strategic benefits of such proposals and (2) the engineering and aesthetic feasibility of either a new bridge, new ramps or renovation including identification of the land which would be required for a bridge and its approaches and further work to refine the estimation of cost of the project.

It is clear that on the subject of strategic transport planning the issues surrounding the logistics of pedestrians and cyclists crossing the River Avon in Stratford upon Avon need to be addressed, and considered on a much wider scale in order to future proof, prior to solving the technical and engineering constraints of an individual and partly isolated site.

Until such time as these challenges have been addressed, the installation of approach ramps leading to Lucy's Mill Footbridge cannot be considered further. This response is not set out to dampen enthusiasm for the project or to raise expectations, merely set out the County's position as objectively as one can. With this obstacle in mind it would be advisable to address future correspondence to our Transport Planning team in order to consider it alongside the wider plans for Stratford upon Avon on a whole.

On a final note, Cllr Fradgley recently posed the scenario to an officer of Bridge Maintenance whether FLMFB could acquire ownership of the footbridge, from WCC in order to undertake the installation of the concept ramps. This is indeed a more complicated matter than first pictured. Change of ownership would not address the wider issues mentioned regarding a suitable structure serving all intended members of the public, pedestrians and cyclists, and the local highway authority would still remain a stakeholder due to the public right of way being served. A change of ownership does raise further questions on whether the new owner would be best placed to afford the future maintenance liabilities associated with routine structural inspection of the existing bridge deck, subsequent scheduled works, and any other new additions on approach. Could a third party afford to reconstruct the bridge in the event of an incident, such as damage caused by a major flood? In the public's interest it is recommended that the ownership of the footbridge remains with Warwickshire County Council who are suitably placed to coordinate an emergency response arising and continue to maintain the current historic structure at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Young

Bridge Maintenance Manager

cc. electronically

M. Fogarty – Joint Managing Director, WCC

M. Ryder - Head of Transport & Economy, WCC

Cllr Clarke – Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economy, WCC

Cllr Fradgley – County Councillor for Stratford West, & SDC

Cllr Rolfe – County Councillor for Stratford South, & SDC

D. Webb – Executive Director, SDC

T. Perk – Head of Technical & Community Services, SDC

J. Simkins – Group Manager for Design Services, WCC

S.Rumble – Team Leader for Transport Planning, WCC

R.Roberts – Team Leader for Bridge Maintenance, WCC