

THE FRIENDS OF LUCY'S MILL BRIDGE CIC
Stratford upon Avon Town Hall, 1 Sheep Street,
Stratford-upon-Avon. CV37 6EF

Mr Steve Young
Bridge Maintenance Manager
Warwickshire County Council
Warwick
CV34 4SP

28th November 2018

Dear Mr Young,

Thank you for your letter of 13 November in respect of the Lucy's Mill Bridge proposals.

I note your comments regarding the lack of interest and involvement by the County Council in the process to date. We acknowledge that officers have attended a number of meetings with the technical team, and have been less than supportive. What is particularly disappointing is that all the County Council elected representatives that we have approached have declined the various invitations to become engaged in this matter. It would be interesting to understand the status of the 'feasibility study' regarding the possible pedestrian and cycle river crossings, has this commenced, and if not is it likely to commence in the foreseeable future?

I would suggest that if the lack of this study is a reason for 'kicking this matter again into the long grass' then perhaps the County should 'grasp the nettle'. We are not asking for the case to be proven for a new crossing. What we have at Lucy's Mill Bridge is an existing crossing which patently discriminates against a number of user groups, and that we have shown can be upgraded to facilitate crossing of the River Avon by all user groups at this important and established location.

Please be aware that our feasibility proposal will not impact the existing structure or foundations of the existing bridge. Our solution is self-supporting and the junctions of the ramps will merely 'kiss' the existing bridge deck, affording adequate connectivity but without imposing any load on the historic structure.

You note that there is inadequate provision for cyclists. Can I again remind you that there are no cycle paths connecting to the existing bridge, and cycling is specifically prohibited within the Recreation Ground. ("RG"). I believe that the prospect of this bye-law being amended to allow RG cycling is currently nil, a point acknowledged in your bullet points on the 2nd page.

Realistically, we all know that cyclists do cycle within the Recreation Ground, and at present carry their machines up steep steps, at some risks to the cyclists and to other users on the steps. Our proposal will better facilitate their actions, and the proposal is to make this bridge 'cyclists dismount only'.

We have been at great pains to stress to all parties that this proposal is a 'concept' and 'feasibility only' so the architectural style of the new ramps is yet to be properly considered. We believe that it is possible to create a complementary design to the existing 'art deco' appearance. It is therefore disingenuous of you to cite this as a reason for the County's lack of interest. The District Planning Officer is content with our proposals and has been most supportive of both the principle and the

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concept drawings discussed at length with them to date. The design development will commence at the point of appropriate encouragement from the owners, yourselves, a process of course your officers will be closely involved in.

Can I correct you that in respect of costs, the circa £1m is inclusive of professional fees at 15%, as stated on the cost summary sheet. Messrs Faithful and Gould, the Group's Quantity Surveyor advise us that costs have increased by circa 3% in the year since production of the cost plan in December 2017. In the scheme of things the cost, and particularly in comparison to a new crossing, should you have the site available for it, is low and presents best value to solve the inadequacies of the facility at this nodal point in the Town. Further cost would be required to be expended for decorative maintenance upgrade of the existing bridge, a cost provision that you will already have been aware of and provision will presumably have been made for by the County.

What are the other concerns and costs that you refer to in your letter?

We fully acknowledge that the funding of this project is subject to significant budgetary restraints and that use of (WCC) reserves may well not be approved but there are other options which we would ask for your position on. These are detailed in the final paragraph of this letter.

You refer to objections to the proposal in social media: Support for the proposal has been overwhelming, with the few negative comments having been associated with the length of the ramp on the RG side of the river, (which is of course a function of the DDA regulations) and secondly comments about the detailed design of the proposals. As stated on a number of occasions, the proposal is schematic and concept, no design for the aesthetic has been discussed or progressed. Comprehensive consultations and design development will be carried out at the appropriate stage. The route of the 'RG side' ramp will be behind the line of river bank willow trees, which will assist in breaking up the mass of the new construction.

The fact remains that there is proven need for a non-discriminatory crossing at this point in the town. It is suggested that our proposal will solve this issue. To suggest that 'feasibility studies' need to be undertaken only further delays the rectification of an overdue problem. Engagement with your Transport Planning colleagues would be welcomed if it precipitated some action to enable user groups that are currently denied access the ability to cross the river. This proposal, however remains the sole solution available to the Town that can be delivered and moreover for minimum cost.

We did ask Cllr Fradgley to ask if you (WCC) would consider transfer of ownership, and if so under what conditions. Public works (their ownership) can be transferred to other statutory bodies, or to Trusts etc., and the latter would allow access to grants that WCC may not be eligible to apply for, or for other fundraising opportunities to be used (such as crowdfunding). Trusts can be part of a portfolio of a public authority, whilst still being subject to the oversight of elected member and their officers, but they do allow everyday people to invest into their community, for projects such as this. Naming rights, gifts in kind (i.e. materials), volunteer support etc. - these also offer the private sector a chance to contribute to public infrastructure and to the well-being of all residents and visitors alike. We would very much appreciate your insight into how and when this could happen - if it is possible - and it may be that ownership and control as or after the works are completed is more appropriately vested in the District Council, who are perhaps better placed to cater for the requirements of their residents and visitors, and indeed are showing a more positive and proactive approach to solving this ongoing and 'running sore' of a problem.

We look forward to moving this project on in a more positive light.

Yours sincerely,

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Richard Eden

Chairman of the Friends of Lucy's Mill Bridge

CC

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. Web – Executive Director, SDC

T. Perks – 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