

Pewsey Road Bridge

The works at Pewsey Road Bridge were given careful consideration and planning before being implemented, and has been the subject of considerable consultation over a number of years.

The problems with the bridge were highlighted in September 2000 when consultation was undertaken with town and parish councils about sub-standard bridges. Pewsey Road Bridge is a 1920s reinforced concrete structure which has rusting reinforcement, and needs to be replaced as it has sub-standard capacity for carrying traffic on an important A class road. Unfortunately, it is one of the two river crossings in a town which already often suffers from traffic congestion. There are limited alternative diversion routes.

Closing the bridge or implementing weight limits were not feasible because of the importance of the route and its use as an alternative route when the High Street is closed. In view of the bridge's condition and type of construction it became apparent that replacing the existing structure was the only feasible option.

The site is constrained by adjacent development, with no space for a temporary crossing, and very little working space to accommodate major construction operations of this type. In addition the bridge carries important BT and other services across the river. The constrained site and need for major repairs meant that keeping the road open, even with one way traffic would not be possible during most of the works. There was not room to build a replacement bridge to slide into place during a short closure as is sometimes used on railway and motorway crossings.

In planning the works and the programme there was consultation with the local community through the town council, with an initial letter sent as long ago as December 2006 regarding the feasibility study. Discussions took place with the area board and town councillors in July 2009, and there was a presentation to the town council in September 2009. Further meetings took place regarding the details of the scheme with the town council in December 2009.

In advance of the works signing was erected on the approaches to the town warning of the works and potential delays, and that local diversions are in operation. This advance signing will remain in place as necessary for the duration of the works.

The works have been phased and timed around local events, including the Jazz Festival in July and the Mop Fair in October when the road will be temporarily reopened. The scheme had to fit in with other work on the network being carried out by public utilities elsewhere in the town, and this affected the start date. There are also environmental limitations about working by the river.

In order to fit in with these constraints, the advance work by public utilities to carry out their necessary diversion away from the bridge commenced. However the

scheme programme was adjusted so the road can open during the Mop Fair. The initial work required gas, water, electricity cables and BT cables to be diverted, including those serving the police station and hospital. This had to be carried out while maintaining services to these important facilities and also to the local community. Once this work had been completed and the temporary supplies connected it was possible for the bridgeworks themselves to start. In order to provide safe working conditions for the workforce and public, most of this work had to be done under a road closure.

We appreciate that the local traders and the town council are concerned about the potential effect on trade, especially during the run up to Christmas. The programme of works will now be reviewed to determine whether there are options to reduce the impact of traffic flows. This came as a result of a meeting between the cabinet member for highways and transport and council officers with local business representatives.

The possibility of moving the location of Mop Fair has been discussed, and Wiltshire Council has indicated that it would be willing to assist with providing signing, but it is understood from the town council that moving the fair is not possible.

Delaying the re-commencement of works from after the Mop Fair, in early October, to until after Christmas could have significant cost implications for the council and may not be feasible. However, the possibility of re-opening the bridge in the run up to Christmas is being examined. The position will be reviewed as work progresses.

There was significant congestion when the road closure was initially implemented, which was exacerbated by parking on George Lane, and there are still some problems at times. The use of no parking cones appears to have reduced delays, and the advanced warning signing has been reviewed and improved. The situation is being monitored to determine whether other traffic management measures would improve traffic conditions.

The possibility of changing the direction of traffic flow at the High Street end of the car park has been examined, but there are potential safety implications with conflicts between traffic leaving the car park and pedestrian movements on the High Street. This is not considered to be a desirable arrangement because of the safety implications.

Moving the market from the High Street to the car park may be a way of easing traffic movements in the town, but this is not favoured by the town council. An approach has been made to stall holders to ask them to park sensibly and help the situation.

The introduction of free parking in the town was considered, and while it is possible for the town council to contribute to enable free parking, the costs would be significant, and with the current funding situation this is not something that Wiltshire Council would be able to contribute to.

The safe replacement of this important bridge needs to be carried out in the most efficient and cost effective way possible, especially given the funding limitations that

the council is working within. There are a number of sub-standard bridges in need of maintenance and strengthening in the county, and it is important that we get the best value for money. Delaying works or extending programmes and incurring additional costs is something that the council will seek to avoid.

The council appreciates that any roadworks in a busy town like Marlborough are likely to increase traffic congestion, but the current works are unavoidable if we are to keep our infrastructure in a safe working condition. There are limited options for improving traffic capacity within the town, which often has delays in normal conditions, but staff will continue to monitor the situation in order to identify any further traffic management measures or signing that can be introduced.

For all queries regarding the works and the related traffic and highway issues please contact Peter Hanson in the local area office on 01672-513157 (Mr Hanson will be on leave from 28th August for two weeks, and all queries should be sent to Peter Harris on 01225-713285 during this period). All out of hours queries can be sent to Clarence on 0800 23 23 23.

The future programming of the works is being reviewed to see if there is scope for increasing the time the bridge can be opened before Christmas, and the council and contractor are working on this at the moment. To some extent this may depend on the weather and the conditions encountered during the demolition of the existing bridge and the construction of the foundations of the new bridge.

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