

**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**08 February 2024**

**REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

**APPLICATION NO:** 23/0733/11 (BJW)  
**APPLICANT:** Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
**DEVELOPMENT:** Refurbish Berw Road Bridge. (Phase 3 of the works, which this application supports)  
(amended drainage details, Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and reduced works to banking and retention of trees - received 15/11/2023)  
**LOCATION:** BERW ROAD BRIDGE (WHITE BRIDGE), PONTYPRIDD  
**DATE REGISTERED:** 14/07/2023  
**ELECTORAL DIVISION:** Trallwng

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve, subject to favourable referral to Cadw.

**REASONS:** The proposed works would further continue an informed programme of maintenance and repair works on this important listed structure and vital piece of transportation infrastructure. The works would provide ongoing maintenance and repairs to improve and increase the longevity of the structure and secure its future.

The works are well justified in the accompanying Heritage Impact Statement which provides a compelling justification for the programme of maintenance, repair and replacement works to the bridge.

It is considered that the works would be as physically minimal and visually unobtrusive as possible, while as valuable to the future conservation of this important heritage asset.

Additionally, due to the changes that have been made, following feedback from the public, the works would have a minimal impact on existing trees within the vicinity of the bridge works.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed works would be acceptable.

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**APPLICATION DETAILS**

Listed Building Consent (LBC) is sought for a further programme of maintenance and repair to the structure and the associated infrastructure elements of the Berw Road Bridge (also known as the White Bridge), Berw Road, Pontypridd.

The works follow previous applications for works to the bridge under reference nos. 21/0567/11; 21/970/11 and 22/0188/11 the need for which were exacerbated by the damage caused to the bridge during Storms Dennis and Ciara in February 2020.

Specifically, the proposed works would consist of general repairs to secondary elements including the following:

- Guniting repairs to the abutments;
- Masonry repairs to the wing walls;
- Waterproofing and resurfacing of the bridge deck;
- Renewal and improvement of the underground drainage (this has been amended to an upgrading of the existing drainage to the established outfall, due to feedback from residents concerned about the loss of trees);
- Renewal of lighting columns; and
- Stabilisation of the south-east embankment.

In their summary of the proposed works the agent states:

*Recent works (including Phase II) have mitigated the immediate risks to the structure's integrity and repaired the bridge such that it can be re-opened and remain functional. However, additional works are proposed to maintain and restore the structure to reduce ongoing deterioration and further prolong its life and heritage.*

*The proposals principally aim to protect the structure and mitigate deterioration whilst resulting in minimal impact on the evidential and aesthetic values of the historic asset. As such, the predicted benefit decisively outweighs the harm to the value of the asset.*

The current application is the culmination of a series of previous applications and works that have sought to quantify the deterioration of the structure and identify the best measures to arrest, maintain, repair and strengthen this important historic asset and key piece of infrastructure. This would have the dual benefit of preserving the structure for future generation to enjoy as well as the utility and connectivity that the bridge itself still provides to the community.

The previous application (Phase II) proposed the comprehensive scheme of removal, reinstatement and repair of the failed areas of concrete as well as the wholesale replacement of the guniting coating, which the previous investigative works had indicated is at the end of its limited lifespan.

The current application proposes the renovation of key secondary elements of the structure such as the bridge deck, railings, luminaires and drainage.

As well as the annotated plans and elevational details, which were amended due to feedback from the public – who were concerned that previous works had resulted in the loss of trees, the application is accompanied with the following report in support of the proposed works:

- Heritage Impact Statement by Redstart, dated December 2023;
- Conservation Engineering Review – June 2023.

## **SITE APPRAISAL**

The structure is an early reinforced concrete bridge spanning the River Taf between Berw Road and the Parade in Pontypridd. The bridge, which carries pedestrian and vehicular traffic forms a vital link between the communities of Trallwn and Berw Road within the wider Town of Pontypridd.

The bridge has been subject to maintenance and repair following exploratory works, particularly following Storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020.

The current proposal is to secondary elements of the bridge structure, which is a Grade II\* Listed Building, record number 24848, the details of which are as follows:

### **Location**

Spanning the River Taff approximately 0.7km NNE of Pontypridd Bridge.

### **History**

Built in 1907, designed by P R A Willoughby, surveyor to Pontypridd Urban District Council, in association with L G Mouchel & Partners, pioneers of reinforced concrete construction. The contractor was Watkin Williams & Page. Its river span, of 35m, was when built the longest reinforced concrete arch in Britain.

### **Exterior**

Reinforced concrete bridge of a single arch spanning the river and narrower outer round-headed arches. The river is spanned by 3 parallel segmental trusses with cross braces and vertical spandrel columns to support the deck, springing from shallow piers on common bases. The outer arches have similar detail. The parapet has been replaced with modern galvanised railings. The abutments are of rock-faced sandstone, belonging to an earlier bridge on the site. The tops of piers have added lamp posts.

### **Listed**

Listed grade II\* as a major road bridge belonging to the first generation of reinforced concrete construction, a type of structure now exceptionally rare in Wales.

## PLANNING HISTORY

22/0188	White Bridge, Berw Road, Pontypridd	Various external works of maintenance, repair and replacement of defective items and materials of the historic structure including the columns, beams, arches, pier bases, parapets, abutments, adjacent walls and associated infrastructure (Application for Listed Building Consent).	Granted 17/05/2022
21/0970	White Bridge, Berw Road, Pontypridd	Trial repair works to representative portions of the Berw Road Bridge (Application for Listed Building Consent).	Granted 02/11/21
21/0567	White Bridge, Berw Road, Pontypridd	Repair works to bridge (application for Listed Building Consent)	Granted 03/09/21
18/1362	White Bridge, Berw Road, Pontypridd	Survey and investigation of the structure, to provide sufficient information to design appropriate, long term and sympathetic, repairs and strengthening (application for Listed Building Consent)	Granted 26/06/19

## PUBLICITY

This has consisted of consultation with neighbouring properties, the display of site notices surrounding the site and a press notice. Due to initial concerns received by local residents the scheme was amended in terms of the drainage arrangements to avoid any works to trees. Residents were concerned that previous works included clearance works that had removed mature trees and were concerned that further mature trees would be lost.

The applicant has confirmed that the current proposed works to the bridge would not involve the loss of any further trees.

is likely that the normal loss of dead and dying trees within the immediate area are the source of these concerns and are erroneously being associated with this application.

## CONSULTATION

Transportation Section – no objection

Land Reclamation and Engineering (Drainage) - From a Flood risk management (FRM) perspective we have no objection however the alteration of the drainage and its proposed improvements may require ordinary watercourse consent (OWC) and as such the applicant should engage with RCTCBC FRM in pursuant of any approval which may be relevant.

Public Health and Protection Division – no objection.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) – has some concerns, however, these can be overcome by inclusion of a condition in relation to pollution control into the River Taff.

Countryside, Landscape and Ecology – no response received.

Pontypridd Town Council – no response received.

The following National Amenity Societies were consulted and have made no representations to the proposals:

Ancient Monuments Society; The Georgian Group; The Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales; The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; The Victorian Society; The Twentieth Century Society and the Council for British Archaeology Wales / Cymru.

### **Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan**

The current LDP's lifespan was 2011 to 2021. It has been reviewed and is in the process of being replaced. The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 introduced provisions specifying the period to which a plan has effect and providing that it shall cease to be the LDP at the end of the specified period. These provisions were commenced on 4th January 2016 but do not have retrospective effect.

Therefore, the provisions do not apply to LDPs adopted prior to this date and plans adopted before 4th January 2016 will remain the LPD for determining planning applications until replaced by a further LDP. This was clarified in guidance published by the Minister on 24th September 2020. Subsequently the existing Plan remains the development plan for consideration when determining this planning application.

The application site is within the settlement boundary of Pontypridd and is a Grade II\* Listed Building the site is also within the Pontypridd (Taff) Conservation Area.

**Policy CS2** - sets out criteria for achieving sustainable growth including, promoting and enhancing transport infrastructure services.

**Policy AW2** - advises that development proposals on non-allocated sites will only be supported in sustainable locations.

**Policy AW5** - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

**Policy AW6** - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

**Policy AW7** - development proposals which impact on sites of architectural/or historic merit and sites of archaeological importance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site.

**LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): The Historic Built Environment** (March 2011)

### **National Guidance**

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of national planning policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where national planning policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) (PPW) sets out the Welsh Government's (WG) current position on planning policy. The document incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out the WG's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of planning applications. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040) sets out guidance for development at both regional and national level within Wales, with the thrust and general context also aimed at sustainable development.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

Furthermore, given the minor scale of the proposed development and its relationship with only the immediate surrounding area, there are limitations to the extent such a scheme can have in promoting planning objectives at a national scale. As such, whilst the scheme aligns with the overarching sustainable development aims of FW2040, it is not considered the policies set out in the document are specifically relevant to this application.

### **Other relevant national policy guidance consulted:**

*PPW Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 – Design (2016)*

*PPW Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment (2017)*

*Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023*

## **REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION**

Section 16(2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant Listed Building Consent for any works the Local Planning Authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

### **Main Issue:**

#### **Acceptability of the proposed development on the special architectural and historic merit of the Listed Building**

The current proposal is for works to secondary, though still important, elements of the structure, the major structural works having already been carried out as part of Phase II.

The works build on the information base of previous applications, of an investigatory nature, as well as the knowledge gained in carrying out the current, major, Phase II works, as well as feedback from the public to arrive at the current amended scheme.

It is considered that the works are well justified in the supporting reports, particularly the Heritage Impact Statement and the independent Conservation Engineering Review by Mann Williams.

It is acknowledged that some of the works would have an impact on the character and appearance of the structure and would also include works that are not reversible. However, while these are usually undesirable in terms of works to historic structures, in this instance they are reasonable, proportionate, necessary and are the subject of an extensive and exhaustive series of investigatory works that have also been peer reviewed by an independent CARE accredited consultant structural engineer.

The application would meet the aim of the previous investigatory schemes in providing a suitable, appropriate scheme to the identified secondary elements of the bridge. The proposed works would allow the continued use of the bridge as a key element of transport infrastructure, address its worsening condition while providing a repair schedule that would respect its architectural and historical significance.

It is considered that the proposals are suitably justified through the submitted supporting documentation. The Heritage Impact Statement demonstrates that the works would provide the maximum value to the heritage asset while also having the minimum visual impact on the structure and its special historical and architectural significance. It concludes that the works would result in minimal impact to the evidential and aesthetic values of the historic asset, providing a benefit that would decisively outweigh any harm to the value of the asset.

The Independent Conservation Engineering Review for this application prepared by Mann Williams makes the following conclusions of the approach adopted in the current proposal:

A comprehensive programme of repairs to the primary structure has already been agreed and is in progress (Phase II). Phase 3 of the repairs aims to address secondary elements which if not repaired now, could have a negative impact on the primary structure in due course.

Overall, the proposed works will impact the primary structure to a limited extent.

Many of the phase 3 works are irreversible, a characteristic which repairs to historic structures would normally seek to avoid. However, it is accepted that where elements are past repair (e.g. The lighting columns) there is no practical alternative.

A key point to note is that most of the disturbance to the structure in Phase 3 will be to elements which are not original, and which are of much less historical significance than the primary 1909 concrete structure.

Where works are proposed to the original structure (e.g. to the masonry wing walls) these are local, and the proposal seeks to re-use the existing stonework wherever possible. Reasonable measures are proposed to manage the process of local dismantling (and subsequent rebuilding) where required to remove embedded roots of invasive vegetation. Provided that they are undertaken by suitably experienced contractors (familiar with historic masonry repair) they should have little negative impact and improve the longevity of the structure.

Local intrusive work to the historic fabric (such as the amended drainage works) would be justified as the negative impact is minor and the potential benefit in channelling rainfall away from the back of the abutment is greater than the small loss of fabric.

The renewal of the surfacing of the deck will permit the introduction of waterproofing, protecting the 1968 concrete slab from further deterioration.

The stabilisation of the south-east embankment and the introduction of rock armour at its base will be more visually intrusive. Overall, however, the slight negative impacts of these items on the aesthetics and setting of the bridge are outweighed by the benefits of protecting the environs of the primary structure from future flood events, probably the single most significant future threat.

In conclusion the review states:

*On balance, Phase 3 repairs are locally intrusive, their impacts are limited and having considered the impacts of the proposals on the historic structure from a conservation engineering perspective, it is clear that they are desirable interventions. They should effectively address the secondary elements of the bridge, helping to safeguard the*

*historic structure for the future while locally improving aspects of its setting and character.*

It is considered that the HIS provides a compelling justification for the currently submitted programme of investigatory works to the bridge and the method statements and engineering review provide the framework and rationale for the proposed approach.

The proposed works are the logical result of thorough investigative preliminary works and additional knowledge gained from the ongoing structural works that have informed the approach taken.

While the works will have an impact on the on the secondary elements of the structure, these are either on a like-for-like basis or are replacing elements that are not as historically important as the main 1909 concrete bridge.

The comments of NRW, who previously issued of a FRAP consent, is acknowledged. Consequently, it is considered it would be reasonable and necessary to include their suggested condition to the approval.

The issue of tree loss is one that has arisen due to the works carried out under Phase 3. The applicant has assured that no further trees would be lost as a result of the current works. Despite this being a peripheral issue in terms of the Listed Building Consent, it is considered that this has been adequately addressed and led to an amendment to the drainage proposals that would be far less invasive to the structure as well as trees within the locality.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed works would be acceptable and a recommendation for approval is offered.

**RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to favourable referral to Cadw.**

1. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan(s) no(s)
  - GC4124-RED-78-XX-DR-S-7803\_C01 - SE Embankment Scour Protection GA
  - GC4124-RED-78-XX-DR-S-7810\_C01 - Masonry Abutment and Wingwall Remedial Works
  - GC4124-RED-78-XX-DR-S-7801\_C01 - Existing General Arrangement.pdf
  - GC4295-RED-05-XX-DR-D-0501\_P05 - Drainage Layout.pdf
  - GC4295-RED-05-XX-DR-D-0503\_P04 - Drainage Details-Sheet
  - GC4295-RED-00-XX-DR-Z-0001\_P01 - Site Location Plan.pdf

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission

2. Notwithstanding the approved details, within a period of three months from the date of this consent, a detailed method statement for the following shall be submitted to and specifically approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Welsh Ministers:

*The removal of invasive roots and vegetation affecting the drainage works*

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure the safety and stability of the works on the structure in relation to the special architectural and historic character of the listed building in accordance with Policies AW7 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

3. Within three months of the date of this consent a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP should include:

- Construction methods: details of materials, how waste will be managed;
- General Site Management: details of the construction programme including timetable, details of site clearance; details of site construction drainage, containment areas, appropriately sized buffer zones between storage areas (of spoil, oils, fuels, concrete mixing and washing areas) and any watercourse or surface drain;
- Soil Management: details of top soil strip, storage and amelioration for re-use;
- CEMP Masterplan: details of the extent and phasing of development; location of landscape and environmental resources; design proposals and objectives for integration and mitigation measures;
- Resource Management: details of fuel and chemical storage and containment; details of waste generation and its management; details of water consumption, waste water and energy use;
- Pollution Prevention: demonstrate how relevant "Guidelines for Pollution Prevention" and best practice will be implemented, including details of emergency spill procedures and incident response plan;
- Details of the persons and bodies responsible for activities associated with the CEMP and emergency contact details;

- Landscape/ecological clerk of works to ensure construction compliance with the approved plan and environmental regulations.

The CEMP shall be implemented as approved during the site preparation and construction phases of the development.

Reason: to ensure that management measures are agreed and implemented for the protection of the environment during construction in accordance with Policy AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.