

Proposed Road Cross-section

The Progress Report 7 prepared by Herefordshire Council (HC) proposes a 4.51m single carriageway for vehicles with a 2.5m combined pedestrian-cycleway on the school side and a 1.69m footway on the west side.

The Parish Council proposes an alternative layout which would provide for a two-way road as set out and discussed below. HC confirmed the bridge is being designed to withstand lorries anywhere on the bridge and therefore the cross-section issue is not critical to the programme; time remains for proper consideration to be given to the alternative layout.

Alternative Proposal

The alternative proposal is for a two-way carriageway 6.5m wide with a 2.2m wide footway on the school side and a 0.5m raised verge on the west side of the bridge. The school side footway would be 0.65m (25 inches) wider than present and the carriageway 0.1m (4 inches) narrower.

Carriageway

A two-way carriageway is considered preferable because;

1. It retains the original character of the road.
2. The layout would be consistent with the route generally to north and south.
3. It avoids the traffic signals, white lines and other equipment which would create an urban feel in a quiet village that lies in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, specifically requires your council, in all its undertakings to *have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty* of the AONB.
4. The traffic signals will detract from the attractive village green and sports field setting.
5. The traffic signals will cause unnecessary delay.
6. The traffic signals will require power 24 hrs a day and regular maintenance and despite the best intentions they will fail from time to time.
7. A safe layout can be provided without traffic signals.

Footway on the school side

At a meeting on 13 June 2008, HC stated that the cycleway would not be signed and therefore it cannot actually be a cycleway. In addition the designers TGP, were concerned that the width was not sufficient for a two-way combined pedestrian and cycle route. It would therefore seem reasonable to treat this route as purely for

pedestrians though no doubt tolerance of youngsters on scooters or bikes etc will continue to be exercised.

The provision of a 2.5m footway as proposed by the Council is largely irrelevant over the short length of the bridge given the width and state of the footway to the north and south.

The Parish therefore proposes a 2.2m footway. This is 50% wider than at present and strikes an appropriate balance between the quality of provision and safety for both motorists and pedestrians. This 2.2m width would also be a reasonable target for future improvements to the north and south in the unlikely event improvements happen.

Footway on the West side

HC claim that a footway is required on this side of the road because it would be unsafe to force those people who would use the west footway to cross the road twice. This is misguided for several reasons.

1. It would only affect a few people, occasionally and as the traffic flow is very low there is virtually no conflict and it is over stated to say it would be safety problem.
2. It fails to consider the benefit to the vast majority of people who use the school side footway who would have a wider, and therefore safer, footway if one was not provided on the west side. The vast majority of school children who cross the bridge twice a day use the school side route. Safety needs to be considered 'in the round' and not in isolation. The traffic signals could also give rise to accidents when drivers chase the green light or even ignore the red when flows are light. Cyclists often are not detected by the signals so they will be inconvenienced, or more likely, will go through the red light.
3. The village generally has only one footway, in fact there is virtually no footway at all on the west side of Walwyn Road through the village from its junction with Old Church Road to Mill Lane, a distance of nearly 1 mile. This side serves the Free Church, estate agent, the post office, the Crown Inn and the library and many houses yet there are no reports of difficulties with only a footway on the east side (school side).
4. The traffic flows are low; crossing the road is not a problem. Visibility opposite the Elms entrance and at Mill Lane is adequate for crossing safely. The one wider footway is preferable to two narrower footpaths.
5. The footpath is currently closed on the west side and the proposed temporary footbridge will be on the school side so by the time the bridge re-opens people will have had nearly a year without a footway on that side.
6. No 'conflict study' has been carried out to assess the degree of conflict there would be by people forced to cross if there was no footway on the west side.

Pedestrian movements should be monitored to establish the numbers that would have to cross compared with the number that be assisted by having a wider footway on the school side. In addition the school should be consulted so the views of main users of the footway can be taken into account. Both this consultation and the pedestrian counts need to be carried out quickly before term ends.

As no footway is proposed on this side, a 0.5m raised verge is required against the parapet.

Carriageway Width

Having established that cyclists will continue to use the road, the minimum width for a 2-way road should probably be 6.5m that is, very slightly narrower than the existing.

Conclusion

A 6.5m two-way carriageway with a 2.2m footway on the school side and a raised verge of 0.5m on the west side would provide a safe layout appropriate to the vehicle and pedestrian flows crossing the bridge. It would provide improved footway width where it is most needed and remove the need for traffic signals. It would conserve the beauty of the AONB and minimise construction costs and long term maintenance liabilities.

Open-minded consideration should be given to this two-way proposal including consultation with the primary school, the Elms, the AONB and the Conservators.