

17 July 2018

Guildford Borough Council
Millmead House
Millmead
Guildford
Surrey
GU2 4BB

For the attention of: Tracey Coleman, Director of Planning and Regeneration

Dear Sirs

**Representation from Guildford Bike User Group (G-BUG) re Planning application Ref 18/P/01213
Proposed construction of a replacement pedestrian and cycle bridge (Walnut Bridge)**

Thank you for inviting Guildford Bike User Group (G-BUG) to comment on the subject proposal. Our comments are from the perspective of cyclists. We support the *concept* of the replacement bridge, since it will in due course enable a cycling route from the station to the town centre. We also recognise it is a key part in the GBC Town Centre Transport Package (College Link +, Sustainable Movement Corridor etc). We have the following comments about the *proposed design* of the bridge, which we lodge as objections but they are made in a constructive spirit, in the hope that the design can be made better for cyclists and all other users.

Bridge design: The design of the bridge will be inconvenient for cyclists and at worst presents safety hazards, which seem to have been inadequately covered in the 'NMU Safety Audit' document:

- **Lower ramp:** The lower part of the ramp down to Bedford Wharf plaza is open along its whole length to steps coming up from the plaza: there is a risk that cyclists – particularly those descending the ramp towards Bedford Road - may slip off onto these steps then suffer a serious fall. This risk will be greatly increased at busy times when cyclists and pedestrians are competing for space, and the open steps coming up from the plaza onto the ramp will lead to pedestrians cutting across cyclists. Placing some form of safety barrier (railings?) along the ramp above the steps is the obvious solution, though we appreciate this conflicts with the apparent desire for an open design.
- **Turns on ramp:** Compared with the ramp on the present bridge (which involves one 90 degree turn) the ramp down to Bedford Wharf with this proposal involves 3 turns (2 x 90 degrees, 1 x 180 degrees). This will be difficult for cyclists to negotiate, with a risk of 'stalling and falling', especially at busy times. Whilst we appreciate the desire to achieve a low gradient on the ramp, we consider that in the interests of safety the design needs to be modified to reduce and preferably remove the need for sharp turns. For example, the ramp could be aligned with the bridge deck, thus coming straight down to Bedford Wharf with no turns. If the design remains within the existing footprint, this would mean a slightly steeper ramp, but not unduly so. Also, consideration could be given to extending the ramp further

out into the plaza, up to Bedford Road, thus reducing the gradient. Steps for pedestrians could be provided to the side, plus a narrower version of the existing ramp for disabled access if necessary.

- **Segregation:** It is not clear from the documentation whether there will be full segregation of cyclists from pedestrians, but we urge that this should be the aim in order to reduce risks of collisions and generally make for a more relaxed journey for all users. It may also in itself reduce the various risks identified above.
- **Abandonment of route of existing bridge:** We note that the route of the existing bridge is to be abandoned and the alleyway through the Billings closed. We suggest that consideration be given to preserving this bridge route as a pedestrians-only option, providing overall greatly increased width. Indeed, the existing bridge route, plus a 'straightened' version of the replacement bridge might provide a lower cost, safer and fully segregated solution.
- **Difficult connection to towpath:** The towpath serves as a popular and well-used cycling route to and through the town. We understand steps will be provided (as existing) down to the towpath, but these will be steep, and hence difficult and dangerous for cyclists to carry bikes up and down. This will deter a direct connection for cyclists between the towpath and the new bridge, missing an opportunity to incentivise more cycling (and less driving) to the station and town centre from suburbs to the North and South. Also, many cyclists now come to Guildford by train to head south on the towpath to join the Downs Link, and are disappointed to find how difficult it is to make that connection. Assuming that other options (ramp, lift etc) were considered but rejected for good reasons, we consider it important to ensure that the design of these steps facilitates safe carrying of cycles, with minimum gradient and incorporating measures such as a 'cycle gutter'.

Complete cycling route required: Although it is probably outside the remit of this planning application, we feel it is important that GBC sets out a plan for the connections to/from the new bridge. The Walnut Bridge is to be part of a through-cycling route between the station and the town centre. To be effective, cycling must be possible along the whole route. We welcome the plans to provide some form of direct crossing to the bridge entrance across Walnut Tree Close (the latter hopefully having been closed to through traffic). But, the route across the station forecourt currently comprises a narrow path through the station car park and a narrow ramp. On the other side of the bridge, the link from Bedford Wharf to the town centre at North Street will presumably be along Bedford Road which is one way, then along the pavement along Onslow Street in front of the night club, then over the light controlled crossing at the Friary Centre, then along the pavement in front of the Friary Centre to lower North Street, which is again one-way. On both sides of the bridge therefore the access routes are either too narrow for safe shared use especially at busy times, or one way. GBC must clarify its plans to provide adequate cycling access routes, otherwise the benefit from enabling cycling on the bridge will not be realised. We appreciate that these matters are complicated by the development plans for the station and Bedford Wharf, but GBC should put forward a vision for the cycling route that can be enforced upon these developments.

We recognise that cycling is not the only aspect of the design and compromises may be necessary. We would be very willing to meet with Council officials and their agents to better understand the



*The Guildford
Cycling Campaign*

www.G-BUG.org

reasoning behind the design, and to help refine it, so that this substantial investment offers best value for money for all users and council tax payers.

Yours faithfully

Doug Clare

Chair

Guildford Bike User Group