

COUNCIL 29 FEBRUARY 2024

SUPPLEMENT TO AGENDA ITEM 12: MEMBER QUESTIONS

RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VIV PARRY REGARDING LUDFORD BRIDGE

Ludford Bridge is one of the oldest in Ludlow it was not built to take heavy lorries and trucks of the size we have now.

Many people are asking if we can do something about this because we once again have lost four large top stones from the main part of the parapet which seem to have dropped into the river on one side. Is it possible to have signs erected further out on the end of the A49 into Overton Rd telling the drivers that the bridge is not suitable for HGV vehicles over a certain weight and signs on the other main roads into town giving the weight and other possible way that can be used.

I know that if this bridge should collapse this would make life hard for people driving around the town, locals and visitors use this way into the town centre this is an important route to other parts of the town a few years ago Overton Road was closed for a collapsed wall it meant long queues, traffic lights causing delays.

I know that the bridge is checked every year but the people who have approached me would like something done now, signs are cheaper than repairs if this beautiful bridge collapsed the town would suffer badly, shops, public houses and businesses would be affected.

Response from Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways

There are no structural concerns regarding the current width and weight limits arrangements currently in place at the bridge, with no future restrictions at the bridge being considered/ planned at this time. There have been some maintenance issues and repairs carried out accordingly, which are briefly described below.

In 2005-6 Shropshire County Council consulted on a number of parking & traffic movements through Ludlow, including weight limit proposals for Ludford Bridge & its approaches. There was a wide-ranging public consultation including a public exhibition in the summer of 2005.

There were objections to the proposed weight limit on Ludford bridge from the Highways Agency, the Road Haulage Association and from the Police. The main objection was the impact of extra lorry movements on the northern junction of the A49 and its approaches to and from Ludlow.

Amending the scheme from a weight limit to a width limit would not change the proposed diversion route, so it is likely that there would be similar objections. Objections from any of these bodies or agencies will result in a full-scale public enquiry for the scheme to proceed.

Officers of the Council have consulted informally with the Police; the Police have indicated that they do not have the resources to enforce a weight or length limit on Ludford Bridge. According to our records, Ludford Bridge has been struck by HGV's 5 times in the past 5 years the cost of these minor repairs is minimal compared to the estimated £800,000 to build a roundabout to provide access to the A49 at the northern junction. The only other suitable route for HGV's is via Henley Rd and Gravel Hill; this is unacceptable due to the number of residential properties and routes used by school children.

We have commissioned our term consultant to carry out surveys of the HGV movements on Ludford Bridge and the northern slip roads of the A49 to obtain up to date traffic figures. Armed with these responses Shropshire Council will contact the Highways Agency, the Road Haulage Association & the Police before deciding upon the next action, to ascertain if the view of the bodies and agencies has been revised.

A review as to the current signing could be carried out (subject to available/ allocated funding) and initial thoughts are that improved signing will assist the current situation, with specifically signing and advising of the width restriction at the A49/ B4361 junction. This review will also include the consideration of height restrictions on other routes into the town centre.

We do see that signing improvements will have a positive impact without the introduction of formal weight and width limits, and can be considered as part of a phased approach and that could stand independent of any further phases of work associated with formal weight/ width limits.