

PLANNING STATEMENT PS rev1

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement supports an outline planning application for a replacement single-lane modular bridge at Forge Mews, Bassaleg, using the existing West Abutment and East Pier, with partial dismantling of the existing damaged structure.

The proposal restores vehicular access to 19 homes currently severed since 2021, while minimising environmental impact, cost, and construction disruption.

The application is submitted by John Blackwell, who does not own the land. Certificate B and Notice 1 have been served on Newport City Council as landowner.

2. Description of Proposed Development

The proposal comprises:

Controlled dismantling of damaged concrete beams and deck

Retention of the existing West Abutment and East Pier, both previously assessed as structurally sound

Installation of a 4.0m single-lane modular type bridge

A 3.0m segregated pedestrian walkway

No works within the river channel

No new foundations

No land acquisition

Pedestrian access and existing services maintained throughout construction

This is a low-impact, low-carbon, rapid-delivery solution.

3. Planning Context and Policy Compliance

3.1 National Planning Policy (Wales)

The proposal aligns with:

PPW11 – Sustainable Development

TAN 15 – Flood Risk (no change to river profile or floodplain)

Active Travel (Wales) Act (safe pedestrian route maintained)

3.2 Local Development Plan (Newport)

The scheme supports:

Policy SP1 – Sustainability

Policy T1 – Transport Improvements

Policy CE4 – Flood Risk

Policy GP4 – Highways and Accessibility

The proposal restores essential access to 19 homes at minimal environmental cost.

Enables Newport CC to comply with Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980

4. Key Material Considerations

4.1 Reuse of Existing Structural Supports

The 2021 EDS structural report confirmed the West Abutment and East Pier are in good condition.

Reusing them:

Avoids new foundations

Avoids river works

Avoids ecological disturbance

Avoids flood modelling

Reduces carbon significantly

The remaining beams (W1, W2, W5, W6 and C1, C2, C5, C6) become non-structural elements once the modular bridge is installed.

They carry no vehicular load and remain only to support existing services and avoid unnecessary demolition.

The modular bridge is a self-supporting structure that transfers all vertical and horizontal loads directly into the existing West Abutment and East Pier.

Their retention also reduces environmental impact and maintains continuity of utilities throughout construction.

4.2 Construction Access and Pedestrian Safety

The existing bridge is 13.25m wide.

A 3m pedestrian route can be safely maintained during dismantling and installation.

This directly contradicts consultant claims that access cannot be maintained.

4.3 Environmental Impact

The proposal requires **no in-river works**, no cofferdams, no piling, and no disturbance to the riverbed or banks. All works occur above the existing structure.

Since the proposal reuses the existing West Abutment and East Pier, the river profile and floodplain geometry remain unchanged.

The scheme is therefore flood-risk neutral and does not require hydraulic modelling.

This significantly reduces ecological impact.

All existing services remain in place on the retained portions of the existing bridge.

No diversions, outages, or statutory undertaker works are required.

Minimises construction traffic

Reusing existing structural elements significantly reduces embodied carbon and construction waste.

The modular bridge has a lower carbon footprint than a full demolition and rebuild.

4.4 Cost and Deliverability

The Council's own published documents (WelTAG Lite Jan 2024 Rev 3 and Options Selection Report Dec 2023 Rev B) cost the preferred offline replacement scheme at approximately £11M, including demolition, new foundations, new bridge structure, ecological mitigation, flood modelling, and associated works.

By contrast, independent enquiries with modular bridge suppliers and dismantling contractors confirm that the proposed alternative scheme can be delivered for under £1M, comprising:

- Controlled dismantling of damaged concrete beams and deck

- Installation of a modular single-lane bridge

- Reuse of the existing West Abutment and East Pier

- No new foundations

- No in-river works

- No ecological mitigation

- No service diversions

- No flood modelling

- No land acquisition

This represents a potential saving of over £10M of public expenditure.

Given the scale of the difference, cost becomes a major material planning consideration in favour of the proposed outline scheme.

Modular bridge delivery is typically 16-18 weeks delivery, with installation in days. This minimises construction duration, traffic disruption, and environmental impact.

4.5 Legal Status of the Highway (Section 41 Highways Act 1980)

Forge Mews bridge remains part of the adopted public highway. No stopping-up order has been made under the Highways Act or Town and Country Planning Act. Under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, the Highway Authority has a continuing statutory duty to maintain the highway. The long-established principle of "once a highway, always a highway" applies. This outline application provides a proportionate, low-impact means for the Authority to discharge that duty while minimising cost, environmental impact, and disruption.

It provides a clear pathway to establish single carriageway.

5.1 Why outline Planning is Required at this stage

Outline planning ensures that a viable, lower-impact alternative can be considered alongside the Council's £11M offline scheme.

Without outline planning in place before the Council's application is determined, the alternative cannot be assessed at all.

This application therefore safeguards procedural fairness and ensures that the Authority can consider a proportionate, sustainable option.

5.2 Conclusion

The proposal represents a sustainable, low-impact, low-carbon, and cost-effective solution that restores essential access to 19 homes.

It avoids the environmental, financial, and construction impacts associated with the £11M offline scheme and aligns with national and local planning policy.

Outline planning permission is therefore justified and appropriate.