

Highway Response

Ref: 25/0792

Date: 24/10/25

PROPOSAL: DEMOLITION OF THE OLD BASSALEG BRIDGE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A REPLACEMENT SINGLE SPAN BRIDGE STRUCTURE ACROSS THE EBBW RIVER TO FACILITATE VEHICULAR ACCESS TO FORGE MEWS FROM VIADUCT WAY

SITE: Bridge Over Ebbw River Forge Mews Bassaleg Newport NP10 8NE

Case Officer: Catherine Aldous

Highway Officer: Kevin Jackson

Highway recommendation:

The application is not supported by sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed development will not be prejudicial to the satisfactory functioning of the highway network, raising objections on grounds of highway safety.

Highway Comments:

The shortcomings of the current road layout are noted but Highways consider the proposed scheme to be worse in some respects and therefore raises objections in terms of highway safety.

Key issues are pedestrian routes and safety, driver legibility, vehicular conflicts and visibility splays.

Pedestrian issues

The radius and width of the entry into Station Approach have been altered which has potential to encourage higher entry speeds. As a result, there is a loss of footway width and the crossing points (for pedestrian movement between Caerphilly and Viaduct or Forge Mews) have been relocated. The submitted pedestrian visibility splays show that intervisibility between pedestrians and drivers is reduced dramatically (to 12.9 leading and 8.6 secondary direction). This is not considered adequate for the likely speeds. This raises an objection on safety grounds.

We also note that the crossing width on Station Approach is slightly increased (+1m) meaning pedestrians are at risk slightly longer. In addition, the pedestrian route for those heading towards the new bridge is now indirect. Whilst it is better protected, than the existing arrangement (which crossed four lanes without any refuge) there is a concern that pedestrians will not follow the route putting themselves at greater risk.

Similarly, pedestrians approaching from Forge Mews must cross the road before they get to the bridge and cross again to use the bridge. They may be tempted to walk on the wrong side and cross Viaduct Way without the benefit of any footways and crossing points. There should be footway provision on both sides or measures to discourage unsafe practices as a minimum.

Vehicular traffic issues

The plans do not set out the relevant radii but do show carriageway widths, which are not sufficient for the movements expected in places.

It is noted that Station approach is wider than the main through route. This raises legibility issues. The least trafficked link (new bridge) is the widest with a carriageway width of 7.5m which would be suitable for relatively high concentrations of HGVs and or a bus routes. It is similar to Caerphilly Road which supports through traffic and parking.

We note that the designer considers this is needed to accommodate HGVs, however this is really only a minor residential road, which we would not expect to be more than 5.5m wide (plus footways) as Forge Mews is for most of its length. The width and loss of footway is a result of the inappropriate location and narrowness of Viaduct Way. The route is effectively a chicane that wider vehicles cannot safely negotiate.

The swept paths of large vehicles require roads to be widened on curved sections (if/where they constitute a significant proportion of the traffic). In this case the narrowest part of Caerphilly Road and Viaduct Way is the bend. The extent of widening depends on traffic mix and radius. In this case, the submitted swept paths demonstrate that nothing bigger (wider or longer) than a panel van can traverse the bend without crossing the centre-line.

The proposed highway layout gives clear priority to through traffic, which is sensible, but traffic heading from Caerphilly Road to Viaduct Way must have at least 25m forward visibility (based on 20mph) in normal circumstances. In this instance the right turn (onto the new bridge) can result in stationary traffic, and this is coupled with the likelihood of vehicles crossing the centre line. Additional forward visibility is needed to avoid collisions.

Even with additional visibility there would be insufficient space for two opposing HGVs to pass. This is likely to result in sudden stopping and or vehicles mounting the kerb.

It is not clear what visibility is achieved due to the gradient on Station Road and 90degree bend, as it has not been assessed (despite the pre-app comments and discussions). It does not appear that sufficient forward visibility is available for safe operation, which raises an objection on highway safety grounds.

The submission does not include any swept path assessments for vehicles leaving Station Approach in either direction. It appears unlikely that commercial vehicles can turn left. In any event they approach the major road at an unacceptable angle and cannot effectively observe traffic approaching from Viaduct Way. Proper observations would be very difficult for car drivers and impossible for commercial vehicle drivers. DMRB also observes that where skew junctions are formed there is greater risk of drivers being confused about the priorities and any gradient increases risks further.

Despite the shortcomings of the existing highway arrangement, users can currently make appropriate observations before emerging from Station Approach or Viaduct Way. Highways do not consider the skew junction appropriate or as safe as the existing arrangement. It therefore raises further objections on grounds of highway safety.

The plans do not detail any signage, but the applicant suggests it is improved over the existing. The details should be presented with any amended design along with a road safety audit^{1/2}. The applicant should note that the works would require s111/s38 agreements which are separate and independent of planning legislation. Visibility assessments, swept paths and safety audits will be needed to achieve technical approval and would help to support any further planning submissions.

It is essential to meet the requirements of the highway authority to be able to reconfigure the road or have the bridge adopted. In addition, the existing bridge must be stopped up through a s247 agreement (TCPA) and this will be conditioned if any off-line scheme is successful.

Any further applications should also consider the need to amend the TROs relating to resident's parking and how to close off any emergency access.

Whilst we understand that an online solution potentially brings additional delays and that positioning away from the proposed location is dependant on other factors including characteristics of the ground and the river, we are unable to support any solution that is less safe and legible than the existing arrangement.

In conclusion therefore we would object to the proposals on grounds of insufficient information and highway safety implications.