

Planning Document Review 28/12/25

(The writer highlights in red portions of the reports which require challenge and comments in blue highlight failures in approach.)

Writers Executive Summary

I have reviewed reports and find a bias away from the logical option.

Online and offline score in equal measures until the question of maintaining access over the existing bridge is deemed unavailable during the online construction.

No evidence of construction logic nor demolition logic are provided.

We all know NO vehicle access is available as the bridge has been deemed unsafe (“ Immediate risk of collapse”) yet it is used to prioritise scheme 3. If an online option was reviewed the logic says use the West abutment and East pier as supports. It also suggests partial dismantling of bridge provides more advantages re carbon, sustainability and no flood review necessary provided the new bridge is of equal or less depth than the existing.

This Option was omitted from consideration but no reasons given.

One should also ask is a two way carriageway necessary ..or cost effective.

- If the road is a public highway maintainable at public expense, the council has a statutory duty to maintain it under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. The legal principle is "Once a highway, always a highway," meaning its status and general width cannot be changed without a formal legal order.
- To permanently change the nature or width of a public highway, the council must follow specific legal procedures, typically involving:
 - Public Path Diversion or Extinguishment Orders: Under sections 116, 118, or 119 of the Highways Act 1980, or the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the council can apply for an order to stop up or divert a highway.

- Consultation Process: These orders require public advertisement and a formal 28-day consultation period, allowing any person to object.
- Justification: The council must demonstrate that the change is in the public interest, or in the interest of the landowner, and that the new route is not "substantially less convenient" than the original.

This should have been considered in the scheme development stage.

Single lane access is evident elsewhere in the council area for a longer distance.

The consultant bias and misrepresentation has denied the Newport City Council to comply with its own policies and put a replacement bridge scheme in jeopardy on a time and cost basis .

Documents

1) Bassaleg Bridge WeLTAG Lite Jan 2024 Rev3

Strategic Fit 3/44

The Strategic Appraisal of the long list options has shown that Options 2 and 3 are the best performing options against the scheme objectives and key policy. Option 2 performs well due to the long-term resilience that the full bridge replacement provides as well as the ‘online ’alignment of the bridge providing the most direct route and meeting active travel desire lines. However, the anticipated impacts on pedestrian journeys and increase traffic on the wider transport network impact the overall benefit of the online replacement option.

Option 3 provides similar benefits to Option 2 with the added benefit of a link remaining across the Ebbw River to Forge Mews during construction which ensures that key emergency and refuse services are able to access Forge Mews continuously through the construction phase whilst significantly reducing severance currently experienced by Forge Mews residents.

This is misleading as no access for emergency or refuse vehicles IS permitted. Pedestrian access can be maintained at all times during construction.

Well-being Page 4 /44

The Integrated Well-being Appraisal identified Option 3 to have the most beneficial well-being impact of the shortlist options. This was because this option provides consistent Active Travel provision, particularly during the construction phase and will allow emergency vehicles and refuse vehicles to access the road during construction, to ensure severance to Forge Mews is reduced sooner.

This is misleading as no vehicle access is permitted anyway.

Deliverability Assessment Page 4/44

The Deliverability Assessment shows that Option 3 (Offline replacement) is marginally more deliverable than Option 3 (Should read 2) due to the key deliverability benefits during construction that allow for

access across the Ebbw River to be maintained. This brings key acceptability benefits by ensuring continued pedestrian access to Forge Mews. Option 2 (Online replacement) brings long-term benefits brought by the online structure, however, the short-term disbenefits anticipated during construction impact the short-term disruption and overall acceptability of the option.

This is a statement without reference to the build technique or referral to demolition or construction contractors and outwith the evidence I can provide.

Recommendations 5/44

Following the three elements of the WelTAG Lite appraisal process (Strategic Fit, Well-being and Deliverability) Option 3 (Offline replacement) has been deemed the most beneficial option ahead of Option 2 (Online replacement). Both options were seen as the most

aligned with the scheme objectives and key policy documents due to their ability to encourage increased sustainable transport by creating ATAG compliant active travel infrastructure across the Ebbw River and reducing severance for Forge Mews residents. Both options also performed well in the IWBA and were deemed to bring well-being benefits to the study area. Most notably, both options benefit physical activity levels and ensure equality in terms of access to sustainable transport by providing improved Active Travel provision. **However, it was deemed that Option 3 was marginally more beneficial because the link across the Ebbw River is maintained during the construction phase of the scheme. In comparison, Option 2 is likely to either require the phased demolition of the existing bridge structure or complete closure of the link to construct the online replacement.** This is anticipated to have some negative well-being benefits such as forcing pedestrians and cyclists to divert via the Forge Road/A467 roundabout, results in longer, and less direct Active Travel journeys during construction. The impact of Option 2 during the construction phase is also highlighted within the deliverability assessment, which considers the findings of the previous OSR. The assessment highlighted that Option 2 brings some key short-term disbenefits which result in disruption to residents with the potential closure of the link affecting overall acceptability. Whilst Option 3 presents a more deliverable option in the short-term due to the access to Forge Mews being maintained via the existing bridge structure whilst the offline replacement is constructed. Considering the results of the WelTAG Lite appraisal process which show the overall benefits of both Option 2 and Option 3, and the key deliverability benefits brought by the offline replacement structure, this WelTAG Lite Study recommends that Option 3 – Offline replacement is taken forward to WelTAG Stage 4 for detailed design and delivery.

No evidence is provided to state the pedestrian access is not possible . Detailed review of methods of work will follow but the idea a 3M wide access on a 13.25M wide bridge is totally feasible. The walk time for both routes is within a minute.

3.4.8 Newport City Council Local Transport Plan Objectives 21/44

Whilst Option 2 achieves these objectives once constructed, the key impacts that would be felt during construction of the online replacement bridge, which results in the closure of a link across the Ebbw River reduce the overall beneficial impact of the option. Most notably, the resulting impact of installing a highway junction on the A467 to accommodate traffic to/from Forge Mews during the construction phase increases the likelihood of accidents and increase traffic on both the A476 and potentially the M4. This would result in wider impacts on the transport network in Newport and delay progress towards more sustainable modes of transport.

This is a mixed message and the clarity is as follows... access for pedestrians is available during construction . No access for vehicles is available as now.

Table 4.2:3/44 Overall Well-being Scores for Shortlist Options

Both options score 29 yet the bias against access being maintained is the decisive factor . In balanced approach a method of construction maintaining both services and pedestrian use should have been reviewed and leads to Option 2 again.

5.1 Acceptability Page 27/44

During construction Option 3 provides the opportunity to build the new offline bridge prior to demolition of the current structure, to ensure continued pedestrian access to Forge Mews.

For Option 2, the same access that is currently in place could be maintained (pedestrian and cycle access), however there will be complexity to a phased demolition regarding noise, access and management of flood risk which could impact overall acceptability of this option.

COMPARE THIS WITH 5.3 RISK which states all three schemes will suffer.

5.2 Feasibility 27/44

Given that Options 2 and 3 are similar in design and purpose, it is notable that **option 2 is costed cheaper than Option 3** on both high and low estimates, making Option 2 more financially viable. Whilst both Options 2 and 3 are expected to have similar levels of embodied carbon,

Option 2 provides the most sustainable use of land, as reported in the structures report, which highlights the likely increased longevity and safety of an online bridge rather than an offline bridge.

However, Option 2 comes with a level of uncertainty regarding flood modelling and the potential implications on the bridge design. Flood modelling is required to determine measures such as structural levels and profile which will impact the programme, for instance potentially on the tie-in with the existing road network.

Utilising the existing pier and abutment with a module bridge negates flood review as nothing changes... on the contrary free height above the river increases.

5.3 Risk 28/44

In terms of delivery, Option 3 has the advantage that the existing bridge can continue to operate whilst the replacement offline bridge is constructed, therefore reducing the impact on local residents during construction. However, **all three** options are likely to cause disruption to residents due to construction traffic, the potential embankment/tie-ins from new bridge structures and the implications of flooding (pending flood modelling and NRW consultation). Safe management of access is also required for all options.

Access for pedestrians and cyclists is possible with a co-ordinated approach to Option 2. Again the report is misleading.

Table 8.2 Key well-being considerations.39/44

NB Option 2 scores better (Review table)

No attendance from construction personnel !!!!

9.2 Recommendations 43/44

Both options also performed well in the IWBA and were deemed to bring well-being benefits to the study area. Most notably, both options benefit physical activity levels and ensure equality in terms of access to sustainable transport by providing improved Active Travel provision. However, it was deemed that Option 3 was marginally more beneficial because the link across the Ebbw River is maintained during the construction phase of the scheme. In comparison, Option 2 is likely

to either require the phased demolition of the existing bridge structure or complete closure of the link to construct the online replacement. This is anticipated to have some negative well-being benefits such as forcing pedestrians and cyclists to divert via the Forge Road/A467 roundabout, results in longer, and less direct Active Travel journeys during construction.

The impact of Option 2 during the construction phase is also highlighted within the deliverability assessment, which considers the findings of the previous OSR. The assessment highlighted that Option 2 brings some key short-term disbenefits which result in disruption to residents with the potential closure of the link affecting overall acceptability. Whilst Option 3 presents a more deliverable option in the short-term due to the access to Forge Mews being maintained via the existing bridge structure whilst the offline replacement is constructed. Considering the results of the WelTAG Lite appraisal process which show the overall benefits of both Option 2 and Option 3, and the key deliverability benefits brought by the offline replacement structure, this WelTAG Lite Study recommends that Option 3 – Offline replacement is taken.

How does one weigh “ anticipation’ in this context ? Access is available over the bridge for pedestrians.

2) Options Selection Report- Final Dec 2023 Rev B

Executive summary

Mott MacDonald has been commissioned by Newport City Council (NCC) to produce an option selection report for the replacement of Old Bassaleg Bridge following the conclusion of the Structural Assessment in January 2023 where it was established that it is not feasible to certify a meaningful Assessment Live Load (ALL) rating for vehicle live load on the structure.

The options explored in the report are as follows:

1. Demolition of the existing bridge only (no replacement)
2. Online bridge
3. Offline bridge
4. Offline road bridge with an online footbridge
5. Acquisition of Forge Mews properties with online footbridge
6. Provision of a highway junction on the A467 with an online footbridge

Since the engineers reports highlighted West Abutment and East pier were reusable why is the option of partial demolition and new bridge not reviewed?

A workshop was held with NCC on 15th March 2023 to discuss the options and obtain initial feedback.

The advantages and disadvantages of each option has been explored in this report, along with key factors that would need to be carefully evaluated at the detailed design stage of the chosen option.

The report also discusses the constraints associated with any future scheme, including existing utilities, the Public and users of bridge, traffic disruption, flooding, ecology, structural form, land ownership, construction aspects and programme.

Each option has been evaluated against the criteria below:

- Capital cost
- Whole life cost
- Public Safety

- Maintenance
- Programme
- Service diversions
- Technical complexity
- Embodied carbon

The options have been scored against each other in order to identify a preferred option. Many of the options have a comparable score even though they have different issues associated with them; this reflects the number of constraints applicable to each scheme. Each scoring criteria is given a weighting specific to this project reflecting Client requirements. No single option stands out above others as having significantly less issues that would need to be addressed during the next phase of the project. **However, Option 2 (online replacement) has been identified as a preferred option.** The existing bridge would be demolished and replaced with an online bridge accommodating traffic and pedestrians, i.e., a replacement structure. **Although this option is not as economically advantageous as others,** it is less likely to have significant political, social and safety implications.

[Page 45/126 proves Option 2 is cheaper than offline replacement.](#)

5.3.3 Advantages 26/126

The advantages of this option include:

- a new structure with 120-year design life;
- pedestrian and vehicular access arrangements would remain as it was prior to the bridge's closure due to damage, minimising the impact on the adjacent road network;
- reduction in the diversion requirements for the existing services, though these would need to be managed during demolition and construction;
- **flexibility of options for a shorter span bridge which could be achieved by spanning from the existing western abutment to the eastern pier location, where the buried portion of the existing bridge would be removed. Similarly, the existing western span could be replaced with a culvert to reduce the span length of the bridge;**

- a shorter span bridge would be able to offer flexibility in the form used, e.g., modular systems could be used which may offer capital cost savings. This type of structure could be explored further with a specialist supplier; and
- this option would be able to provide a cycle route, separate pedestrians from motorists and separate cyclists and pedestrians from motorists, enabling active travel compliancy.

5.3.4 Disadvantages^{26/126}

The disadvantages of this option include:

- complexity of a phased demolition of the existing bridge and construction of a new bridge,
which presents the following challenges:
 - maintaining access throughout the works
 - diversion of existing utilities and interaction with statutory undertakers
 - disruption to residents, e.g., noise
 - management of flood risk
- implications on flooding - flood modelling is required to determine measures such as structural levels and profile which will impact the programme;
- a potentially longer construction programme compared to other options;
- higher capital cost compared to other options; and
- ecological disruption as there are nearby INNS flora and fauna habitats

Results of consultation with a specialist contractor ??????????
None recorded per documents released under freedom of information requests and so I have pursued this option of a shorter span bridge with specialist contractors.

- 1 Huge capital costs re a shorter span.
- 2 No work to river using West abutment and East pier which are defined as
being in good condition.(EDS Report Aug 2021)
- 3 No change to flood condition if West pier left in place.

4 No ecological considerations re new foundations.

5 Better traffic flow.

6 Shorter build time.

7 Better carbon

The reports make great play of not being able to provide pedestrian access during construction . This is a nonsense on an existing 13M wide structure where only pedestrian and cycle access is required. Potential to only part demolish (Dismantle in a controlled manner) strengthen and leave the existing concrete side parapets in position

7.2 Preferred option 50/126

The preferred option is identified as Option 2, which would replace the existing bridge with an online road bridge to accommodate pedestrians, vehicular traffic and the existing services.

This option is less likely to have significant political and social implications as the original pedestrian and vehicular connectivity would be maintained. Though the capital cost is higher than some other options, it is typical for standard highway infrastructure. This option also minimises service diversion which could be particularly beneficial in reducing any negative impacts on the existing utilities. There are fewer public safety issues compared to Option 6, and although there are risks associated with the construction site proximity to the residential area and maintaining safe pedestrian access, this is applicable to all options. Key disadvantages of this option include a higher capital cost and a slightly higher embodied carbon than for other options. The programme is also expected to be longer than other options, as the new bridge cannot be installed until the existing bridge has been part (or fully) demolished.

Please refer to the cost schedule page 45/126 where the evidence shows the online is CHEAPER.

If the shorter span option had been reviewed the embodied carbon would be lower, capital costs further reduced.