

Committee: Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Date: 30 October 2019

Wards:

Subject: Update on Bishopsford Road Bridge

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport, Councillor Martin Whelton

Contact officer:

Recommendations:

A. To update councillors on Bishopsford Road Bridge.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates councillors on the progress towards reopening Bishopsford Road Bridge. The bridge is closed for vehicular traffic but is open for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 1.2. Reopening the bridge to all vehicles is a high priority for the council. Although residents might not see day-to-day on-site activity, every possible effort is being taken towards reopening the bridge. A project team of Sustainable Communities and Risk and Insurance undertake daily activities and meet weekly to review progress and set out further work. Lots of activities are taking place behind the scenes working across the council and with other partners including the Environment Agency, FM Conway and others towards reopening the bridge and mitigating the impacts of its closure.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The council had been carrying out deck replacement of Bishopsford Road Bridge as part of the annual highways maintenance programme. Works started on 23rd April 2019 which were due to finish by the end of July 2019
- 2.2. On the evening of Monday 10th June 2019 following a weekend of heavy rain the river Wandle flooded at various points including three houses downstream from Bishopsford Bridge.
- 2.3. The council and its main structures contract, FM Conway, worked on stabilising the bridge during the week 10th-14th June. Council staff also arranged sandbags and other support for the residents in the flooded houses
- 2.4. Four days later on the evening of Friday 14th June 2019 the northern arch of the bridged partially collapsed, breaking the utilities services (gas, water, electricity and broadband) that are routed through the bridge structure. The southern arch was unaffected and the central arch suffered minor structural damage.
- 2.5. The resulting emergency from the gas leak led to Southern Gas Networks (SGN), supported by London Fire Brigade, evacuating homes located close

to the bridge. The council's civil contingencies plan was activated during the night of Friday 14th June and across the weekend of 15th-16th June included council staff, FM Conways staff, the Environment Agency (in their flood risk management and river protection role), Thames Water (to stop the water pipe leak), SGN (to stop the gas leak) London Fire Brigade and the Met Police (to help evacuate residents and secure the area). The council made arrangements to open up a rest centre at Vestry Hall to accommodate evacuated households. Evacuated residents were allowed to return to their homes the next evening (Saturday 15th July).

Actions being taken to mitigate the impact of the bridge closure and bring the bridge back into use

- 2.6. We have completed crack-injection and underpinning works below the bridge to stabilise the central arch. The scour hole on the upstream side of the bridge has been filled with stone and gravel. The scour hole under the northern arch has been filled with marine concrete to stabilise the northern arch and create a safe platform for further works. This work has been essential to make the area underneath the bridge safer for specialist engineers to access the site.
- 2.7. Since July, pedestrians and cyclists have been able to cross the bridge. Guardrails, signage, CCTV and ANPR cameras have been installed to deter motorcyclists from continuing to cross via the pedestrian route. Improvements (lighting, tarmac on path) have been made to the route via Ravensbury Park and further work will be carried out in October to tarmac a small portion of the gravel path where it approaches the bridge to make it smoother for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2.8. The wall adjacent the bridge will also be reduced to approximately knee height to increase natural surveillance and the sense of safety for pedestrians and cyclists in the area.
- 2.9. The council's Road Safety team have offered local schools within 1km of the site the opportunity to take up additional school travel plan walking and cycling training. We have also made a similar offer to Tooting and Mitcham Hub, which has previously hosted road safety events with the council.
 - Harris Merton (high school) (to the west / Hub side)
 - St Theresa's Catholic Primary (to the west / Hub side)
 - Malmesbury Primary (to the west / Hub side)
 - St Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary (to the east / Vestry side)
 - Cranmer primary (to the east / Vestry side)
 - Cricket Green school and Melrose school (to the east / Vestry side)



- 2.10. Since Saturday 20th July Transport for London (TfL) have arranged for bus route 280 to serve Bishopsford Road, Wandle Road and Morden Road. TfL have also added a temporary stop on London Road at the junction of Mitcham Park. On 1st October TfL stated that they are making arrangements for a shuttlebus to serve the area and Morden town centre.
- 2.11. Section 5 of this report sets out the communications being undertaken to keep residents, businesses and others informed of activities. Business rate relief is being considered for local businesses in line with the council's policies.
- 2.12. Between now and December 2019, on-site works include the removal of the small dam associated with the partially collapsed northern arch and the installation of pipework to allow water to flow safely through the bridge without risk of further damaging the structure.
- 2.13. The council has commissioned specialist advisers to look back at the flood event and contributing factors to the bridge's partial collapse. This is expected to report back within six weeks and the findings will be reported to councillors.
- 2.14. The council is also working closely with FM Conways and the Environment Agency to provide detailed inspections, surveys, costing and design options for the repair or replacement of Bishopsford Bridge. Once options have been prepared and reviewed and a preferred option chosen we will be able to give a clearer idea of timescales for its delivery.
- 2.15. With advice from the Environment Agency, the council has also investigated the potential for a temporary road bridge to be built while the repair / replacement of the existing structure is being carried out. The conclusion is that in this particular location, the installation of a temporary bridge that would be capable of bearing vehicles would require significant engineering

works to privately owned land either side of the river to build up the ground along the banks. This is likely to increase flood risk elsewhere along the river Wandle and cause environmental damage. The temporary structure would require an Environment Agency full permit, planning permission, land owners consent and significant time and cost. The council is focussing on the solution to permanently reopen the bridge as the priority.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. In September and October and each month until the bridge is reopened, leaflets are being circulated to c3,000 homes, businesses, schools and other properties near Bishopsford Road Bridge to update occupiers on progress.
MAP
- 4.2. The council also has a dedicated webpage which is updated regularly, including with the contents of the monthly leaflet and with any events that are held regarding the bridge www.merton.gov.uk/bishopsfordbridge
- 4.3. On 14th September 2019 council officers and local councillors held a drop-in coffee event on the Tooting and Mitcham Hub side of the bridge to give residents and anyone interested the opportunity to have an update on how works are progressing
- 4.4. On 16th October 2019 council officers attended Morden Community Forum to update on progress and answer questions.
- 4.5. The body of the report sets out the bespoke engagement being undertaken, including with schools. The website and social media will continue to be updated as matters progress.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. In the short term (October-December), as well as the ongoing measures set out in the body of the report, activities on site will involve:
- Physical changes to improve the sense of safety in the area, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. This includes improving the surface of the path, changes to the hoardings and wall to open up visibility in the area.
 - Activities on the bridge connected with strengthening the flood resilience, removing the small dam and detailed surveys of the structure and the surrounding topography to inform options for repair / replacement.
- 5.2. Further updates will be prepared for councillors once the options for repair / replacement are available.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The council and its main contractor FM Conway are working together under the terms of the existing NEC3 contract in place at the time of the event.
- 6.2.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. On contractual matters the council is operating under its Constitution and contract standing orders.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. As set out in the body of the report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Bishopsford Road Bridge is on the council's corporate risk register and is being closely monitored as a high priority.
- 10.2. The council has prepared a bespoke update to its emergency plan to take account of the site specific considerations and arrangements for any incident involving the bridge and local residents.
- 10.3. The council, the Environment Agency and FM Conways agreed a flood resilience management plan in July 2019 which sets out what technical actions would be taken in the event of a flood to de-risk the area and who is responsible for them (e.g. supply of water pumps, etc.) This is being regularly reviewed and was most recently updated in October 2019.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Map of local schools

Appendix 1 – map of local schools offered additional road safety training / support

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