

COMMITTEE DATE: 03/12/2018

APPLICATION NO: 18/1088/ECC

APPLICANT: Exeter City Council

PROPOSAL: Replacement of Mallison Bridge with elevated boardwalk over riverside walkway to link to existing foot/cycleways at Cricklepit Bridge.

LOCATION: Land/pathway to rear of Samuel Jones Pub and Puerto Lounge Exeter Quay Exeter.

REGISTRATION DATE: 12/07/2018

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The site is located within the historic quayside area of Exeter on the northern bank of the river. The site lies within the Riverside Conservation Area and is also within the setting of several listed buildings including: Custom House (Grade I), Transit Shed (Grade I*) and No.38 Commercial Road (former Kennaway Warehouse, Grade II).

The application proposes the replacement of the existing pedestrian and cycle bridge installed in 1984 (known as the Mallison Bridge after Harold Mallison who left an endowment to Exeter City Council). This structure is deteriorating and would become dangerous over time. The new bridge would be 3.5 metres wide, with the adjacent boardwalk varying in width between 4 and 11 metres. The whole structure would be on the same level as the Quay wall.

The new bridge and boardwalk would consist of galvanised steel beams supported by stanchions sunk into the riverbed/leat. The decking would be constructed of timber with a balustrade comprising of stainless steel posts supporting wire ropes with a hardwood timber top handrail. Seating areas would be provided on the river side of the boardwalk.

The design has been revised in response to consultations and representations. The revised scheme differentiates the bridge design, provides a visual break between the bridge and boardwalk and introduces interest and variation in the width of the boardwalk.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

- Design, Access and Heritage Statement
- Ecological Appraisal Report
- Flood Risk Assessment

REPRESENTATIONS

4 representations (including one from Exeter Civic Society) raising the following issues –

- Concerns that the bridge design is uncompromising, inelegant, will dominate the view, is wholly at odds with the variety of elements that make up the quay area and will significantly harm the character of the area.
- Concerns regarding the materials to be used (in terms of their appearance and environmental impact) and the colour treatment.
- The proposal will put even more pressure on a badly designed pedestrian/cycle path, bringing pedestrians and cyclists into conflict and increasing the risk of injuries to both.
- The bridge needs to be wider than proposed.
- Lack of clarity as to how cyclists will join the path along the river and suggestion that a ramp down from the boardwalk should be provided.

Revised Scheme:

Exeter Civic Society - The Planning Sub-committee of Exeter Civic Society considers that the revised design and plans for the Mallison Bridge and the walkway behind Samuel Jones and the Puerto Lounge are acceptable and we offer no objection to their approval

CONSULTATIONS

County Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (Highways) - No objections subject to condition requiring a Construction Management Plan (CMP). The proposed works are on private land and from a Highways view, the provision of a replacement structure is unlikely to create any significant highway issues.

Historic England

Original Scheme - Historic England does not object on heritage ground to the removal of the existing bridge, but we do have concerns regarding the proposed design of its replacement which, in our opinion, neither sustains nor enhances the significance of the designated heritage assets in the setting of which it would be located, nor does it contribute to revealing that significance.

Revised Scheme - Historic England has no objection to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the revised design has achieved a solution more sensitive to the character and appearance of the surrounding historic environment as a result. As a result of the amendments to the original scheme which have satisfactorily addressed Historic England's previous concerns, we are able to confirm that we no longer have any concerns on heritage grounds in relation to the current proposal.

Environment Agency – No objections subject to a condition to govern construction method to ensure flood resilience.

Living Options Devon – No objections subject to the provision of handrails for the steps.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework – specifically chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities, chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places and chapter 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy

CP9 – Transport

CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

CP18 - Infrastructure

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes

DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design

DG7 - Crime Prevention and Safety

This document represents a material consideration but has not been adopted and does not form part of the Development Plan.

DD1 - Sustainable Development

DD8 - Housing on Unallocated Sites

DD9 - Accessibility, Adoptable and Wheelchair User Dwellings

DD13 - Residential Amenity

DD20 - Sustainable Movement

DD21 – Parking

DD25 - Design Principles

DD26 - Designing Out Crime

DD30 - Green Infrastructure

DD31 - Biodiversity

DD34 - Pollution

Sustainable Transport SPD

OBSERVATIONS

The main considerations in respect of this proposal are the functionality of the bridge/boardwalk, the design, and the visual impact on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.

This bridge provides an important and well used link allowing movement around the Quay area. Whilst the existing bridge has served its purpose well, the adjacent pathway is often covered with swan excrement and has suffered from flooding over recent years. The application proposes a modern bridge and boardwalk that will provide a level access to link in with Cricklepit Bridge and with minimal risk of flooding.

Concerns have been raised regarding the potential conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and others and the functionality of the proposed design. However, the width of the bridge has increased significantly (from 2 metres to 3.5 metres) and therefore the potential for conflict between users should be reduced. Furthermore the increased circulation space, together with the lack of level change, should allow easier and safer access to all users.

Whilst the inclusion of a direct ramp down from the boardwalk to the riverside path was investigated, this was considered by the Environment Agency to present a flood risk so could

not be incorporated into the design. This does mean that cyclists (and others who cannot negotiate steps easily) will need to leave the riverside path slightly earlier and utilise the new path and cycleway that links to the four way junction at Cricklepit Bridge. In order to reduce the potential for conflict in this area, it has been agreed to make amendments to this junction to make it easier to negotiate (in accordance with suggestions made by the Highways Authority).

The area below the boardwalk will be excavated so that water can flow freely under the structure; thus providing increased flow area for the river, discouraging crime and disorder and avoiding build-up of material.

The design of the new bridge has been kept simple with a slim horizontal profile. There is no historic precedent for a bridge crossing in this position and therefore it is considered that a contemporary design would be appropriate. The design and materials aim to keep a lightness to the structure that would not compete with the historic surroundings. The design has also been influenced by the need to ensure no impediment to flood water and no increased flood risk (the Environment Agency raise no objections to the development subject to a condition governing working methods).

Historic England did have concerns regarding the original design of the replacement bridge, which was considered to neither sustain nor enhance the significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets. However, they provided constructive advice as to how these concerns could be addressed and a revised scheme was drawn up.

The revised scheme includes the following amendments:

- Introduction of lighting columns to provide a visual and vertical break at the end of the bridge element and along the length of the boardwalk;
- Change in design of bridge balustrading to visually separate the bridge over the leat from the boardwalk;
- Addition of detailing to the underside of the bridge;
- Amended treatment to supports/uprights for bridge and boardwalk again creating a visual distinction between the two;
- Amendment to and variation in the line and width of the projection of the boardwalk on the River Exe side.

Historic England is now happy that the proposals will preserve the significance of the historic assets and has no objections to the scheme.

Exeter Civic Society, whilst accepting that the Mallison Bridge needs replacing, also expressed strong misgivings about the original design which they felt 'significantly harms the character of the area and should not therefore be approved'. However, Exeter Civic Society also felt that the revised scheme overcome these concerns stating 'we offer no objection to their approval'.

A specific concern was raised by a resident regarding the material to be used for the decking and handrail. The application proposes hardwood and concern was raised concerning the potential use of tropical hardwood; the applicant has confirmed that tropical hardwoods will not be used and has agreed for materials to be submitted for approval prior to the work being undertaken.

Whilst others also raised concerns regarding the design, it is considered that with the revisions proposed the design is appropriate, protects the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and will not detract from the historic surroundings.

Conclusion

The bridge design is functional and offers advantages over the existing structure; the additional width should reduce the potential for conflict between users and the height of the structure above the river should reduce the risk of flooding.

The modern slim line design of the bridge is considered to be appropriate to the location and is sensitive to the character and appearance of the surrounding historic environment. Historic England have no objection to the application.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities 'should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places' which 'enable and support healthy lifestyles' (NPPF, para 91). It is considered that that the additional seating areas will be well used and this new piece of infrastructure will make an important contribution to active and healthy lives for Exeter residents in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to the following conditions –

1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.

Reason: To ensure compliance with sections 91-92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in strict accordance with the submitted details received by the Local Planning Authority on 12 July 2018 (including drawing number MBB – LD/3.1, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report and the Flood Risk Assessment), on 7 November 2018 (including drawing number MBB-LL/05.1) and on 14 November 2018 (including drawing numbers MBB-LL/1.0, LD/01, LD/05, LD/06, LD/07, LD/08, and LD/09) as modified by other conditions of this consent.

Reason: In order to ensure compliance with the approved drawings.

3) Samples of the materials it is intended to use externally in the construction of the development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. No external finishing material shall be used until the Local Planning Authority has confirmed in writing that its use is acceptable. Thereafter the materials used in the construction of the development shall correspond with the approved samples in all respects.

Reason: To ensure that the materials conform with the visual amenity requirements of the area.

4) No works shall take place until the local planning authority have received and approved a Construction Management Plan (CMP) including:

- (a) the timetable of the works;
- (b) any road closure;
- (c) hours during which delivery and construction traffic will travel to and from the site
- (d) the number and sizes of vehicles visiting the site;
- (e) the compound/location where all building materials, finished or unfinished products, parts, crates, packing materials and waste will be stored;
- (f) confirmation that no construction traffic or delivery vehicles will park on the County highway for loading or unloading purposes, unless prior written agreement has been given by the Local Planning Authority;
- (g) The proposed route of all construction traffic exceeding 7.5 tonnes.
- (h) Photographic evidence of the condition of adjacent public highway prior to commencement of any work;

Prior to commencement it is recommended that the developer consults, and if necessary meets with, the Highway Authority to establish a safe means of progress. The approved Construction Management Plan shall be adhered to throughout the construction period.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and public amenity

5) No development shall take place until a detailed Construction Methods Statement is submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. This includes the construction methods within the river corridor. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Construction Methods Statement and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure flood risk is not increased for others.

Local Government (Access to Information) 1985 (as amended),

Background papers used in compiling the report:

Files of planning applications available for inspection from the Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter. Telephone 01392 265223