



## York's Bridge Replacement Scheme Fact Sheet

Walsall Council is seeking to replace the existing York's Bridge on Norton Road, Pelsall, which spans the Wyrley and Essington Canal by The Fingerpost public house. As part of this process the council is keen to hear your views on the scheme.

This document, along with a series of road show events, forms part of the consultation on this scheme. Please read the information provided in this pack (also available on the council's website) and give us your views by either:

- meeting with us at one of our special consultation events and submitting a paper copy of the questionnaire
- completing the questionnaire in this pack or online at [www.walsall.gov.uk/yorks-bridge](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/yorks-bridge)

The existing bridge dates back to the mid-1800s. Its brick arch construction, poor alignments and lack of footways make it unsuitable for modern traffic and unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. The bridge structure has suffered over recent decades and the bridge is currently the subject of a 7.5 tonne weight limit. If nothing is done the bridge will continue to weaken to the point where closure to all road traffic might have to be considered.

The Council has a statutory duty to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the public highway for use by a range of vehicles and other highway users. In the course of developing the current proposal, several bridge construction options have been considered including:

- a) Strengthening of the existing bridge
- b) Use of steel instead of concrete
- c) Precast concrete arch
- d) In-situ concrete deck

The Council first considered strengthening of the existing bridge but there was significant doubt whether the required 44 tonne weight limit could be achieved. Strengthening would have also entailed work to the underside of the bridge and top of the bridge arch which would have decreased headroom to the canal and raised levels on the crown. It was concluded that only the construction of a new bridge could address all of the issues. The current proposals will also allow the retention of the existing historic York's Bridge while still delivering much needed safety improvements including footways and the removal of the hump back road alignment. The construction of the proposed new bridge would be funded by the Department for Transport.

Land use surrounding York's Bridge is primarily residential with some agricultural land located on the north side of the bridge. There is also a public house (The Fingerpost) located to the west of the existing York's Bridge. The construction of the new bridge will require some intrusion onto the common.

The council has taken specialist advice relating to the loss of common land and the impact this will have on ecology and the report can be viewed online.

This will be the second consultation undertaken by the council for this scheme, following the Planning Inspectorate's decision in 2015 that the area of land offered as replacement common land was not acceptable. To make up for loss of the common land, an alternative area of replacement land will be provided with a common land status and ecology compensation measures will be put in place to minimise any impact.

## Existing operation

- No footway provision
- Poor cycling condition
- Narrow lane
- Lack of road users' safety

## Road safety

Collision data for the last three year period is two slight collisions, both near the junction with A4124 Lichfield Road.

## The proposals

The proposals aim to create a healthier and safer environment for people to walk and cycle and for traffic moving through the area. We propose to construct a new bridge to the east side of the existing bridge and to realign Norton Road to the east. The proposed bridge is 40 m long and will carry two-way traffic on a 7.3 m wide carriageway with a 2 m wide footway on the west side. There is 2 m minimum headroom between the bridge and towpath and 3.1 m minimum between the bridge and canal. A small amount (2,465 m<sup>2</sup>) of common land is required in order to construct the new bridge which is less than 0.01% of the total common area.

The proposals aim to:

- Provide pedestrian footways.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Provide a two-way general traffic lane.
- Remove the existing road to the north of York's Bridge and create a new footpath.
- Retain the existing York's Bridge and road to the south as an access road for The Fingerpost public house and residential properties located along the canal side.
- Provide parking bays to the south of the public house to facilitate access to the common.
- Create a pond and several new embankments north of the new bridge.
- Resurface the existing carriageway along to Moat Farm Way (located south-east of the existing bridge) and vehicle track used to access the fields (located north-east of the existing bridge).
- Enhance public realm & safe access to the common.
- Make York's Bridge a more pleasant, well-designed environment.

## Reducing impact of the proposals on the common land

The common land contains a unique collection of trees. It provides a number of benefits, including:

- A significant area of cover provided by the crowns of the trees.
- Improved access to nature.
- A reduction in noise pollution.
- High visual, social and environmental value.

We recognize the environmental significance and local importance of the common land and the need to protect it as far as possible whilst improving York's Bridge. We are working closely with the common land owners, the Canal & River Trust, Wyrley and Essington Canal Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC), Natural England, English Heritage and Friends of Pelsall Commons.

## Scheme Mitigation

Mitigation measures are required along the route as part of the changes to the corridor to help achieve better reliability. The following mitigations have been proposed:

- Providing replacement land up to 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> within the boundary of the existing common land.
- Create and maintain an ecologically diverse and visually attractive landscape which integrates the proposed road into the landscape.
- Reduce the visual impact by planting landscaping in the foreground.
- Provide secured access into the common (which would remain open to the public) to enable people to enjoy the common.