Canal Bridge Safety Consultation

November 2022

1. Summary of Responses

## Introduction

**This summary brings together the consultation free text responses collated through the survey software & hard copy forms provided via the Parish Council Newsletter, at the shop and at the 4 drop-in meetings held in November. It also includes a 1-page Word document response that was received from the governors at the primary school.**

**Please see also:**

1. **Separate PDF for the Survey Responses Verbatim (names omitted)**
2. **Notes of the Public Meeting from 16th November:** This records the response of the B&NES Highways Officer and a colleague to questions from the audience. This can be used to help give replies to views, challenges and suggestions made during the Consultation and in preparing for conclusions and next steps.

A raw review of the views submitted by residents using the response software and forms favours progressing Option 2:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Responses**  | **49** | **100%** |
| Option 2 ‘Traffic Signals’  | 31 | 63.3 |
| Option 1 ‘Informal Give Way’  | 8 | 16.3 |
| Another Option  | 6 | 12.2 |
| None of these Options  | 4 | 8.2 |

Please read further to understand the views of the written responses that supported this raw data.

## Responses supporting Option 1, ‘Informal Give Way’

16.3% supported Option 1 – 8 of 49 responses

Views given for supporting this option included:

* Less disruption outside of peak times and less tailback likely
* Traffic lights would be completely out of character for our village. If Option 1 is deemed viable then it surely must be the preferred option.
* Allows the traffic to flow
* Box junction would be less intrusive on the historic bridge
* Don’t try to fix a problem that isn’t there!
* Traffic speeds *(option 2)* would cause back-up of traffic in High St causing fumes/noise/disruption

Suggestions were made:

* Add in yellow hatching on High Street, as per Option 2.
* Bollards to protect pedestrians crossing near wall ie. safety for children

## Responses supporting Option 2, Traffic Signals

63.3% supported Option 2 – 31 of 49 responses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| View | Comments |
| Safest option/ chosen on safety grounds | * Better safety
* Having reviewed all the options personally and with my colleagues based at our pavilion in Bathampton it was deemed that the selected option would provide the safest route over the bridge for pedestrians and vehicle users. The reasons for this are: the benefit of the uncontrolled crossing by walking during the 'intergreen' period & the clarity over the right of way. We have concerns that should option 1 be selected there would be confusion over the legal meaning of the yellow box marking as well as the fact that, vehicle dependant, it is often hard to see oncoming vehicles on the other side of the bridge. We also thought it was worth noting that at this time of year when the sun is low in the sky, on a morning, it can be hard to see vehicles on the bridge as you are approaching from the toll bridge side, if option 1 was to be selected there will be certain times of the year when vehicles would struggle to see each other, potentially causing two vehicles to meet with one being forced to reverse. This would be eliminated if option 2 was selected.
* Safety of pedestrians
* Safety for children to walk across the bridge.
* I feel it’s safer and easier to see with traffic signals
* Pedestrian safety. The lights are a clear solution that pedestrians and drivers will understand. My concern is that traffic calming will encourage more agressive driving as people compete in rush hour. It doesn’t appear to make it safer for school children or the elderly. People often use the road as a sat nag shortcut and don’t understand the tight layout. The bridge road is blocked on a weekly basis by inconsiderate drivers and oversize vehicles including business deliveries and network rail.
* The temporary lights worked well for the children crossing for school.
* Safety for the children will not be prioritised unless proper traffic measures are in place
* The bridge is too tight for 2 cars to pass plus pedestrians, especially with school children around. Traffic lights would make it safer, plus adapt to the traffic patterns. I don’t live in the village but my children go to the school, and we cross the bridge a lot.
* Safety
* It is the safest option to offer protection to all pedestrians, in particular the school families
* Safer
* I am not an expert in these matters but a traffic light system appears best. A solution should be considered that doesn't create a dangerous traffic backlog towards Bathampton high street. Cars regularly mount the pavement between the school patrol road sign and the 20/oncoming vehicles sign as they attempt to pass each other. This should be factored. For those walking to school from Bathampton high street, this section is the most dangerous part of the journey.
* Less congestion in the village and safer for school run with single carriageway with controlled entry onto bridge (traffic lights). The other option requires self policing of entry onto bridge resulting in more congestion (air pollution) and potential unsafe manevoures (rushing to cross bridge, mounting pedestrian walkway on bridge etc) especially during morning school run that coincides with rush hour.
* Safer
* I believe this provides the best balance of pedestrian safety and traffic flow
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| Option 1 not sufficient | * Motorists, especially of cars, will not be able to see vehicles on the other side of the yellow box due to the up and down curvature of the bridge. They will also not be able to see the other side of the yellow box from their side for the same reason.
* I don't think option 1 would work because the humpback nature of the bridge and the fact it's on a bend means that drivers can't see if the road ahead is clear when entering the bridge.
* I don’t believe option 1 would work because most drivers would not be able to see the other side of the yellow box before they entered it. This is because the “dome” of the bridge is so high.
* Visibility over the bridge means option 1 just won't work. Constantly amazed how many cars will just go even they can see there isn't space, or are encroaching on the side of the road.
* I would expect low levels of competence with voluntary 'Give Way' sections reducing the safetyof Option 1. In addition I have noticed on many occasions vehicles driving recklessly (high speed, on the pavement) over the canal bridge which is dangerous for pedestrians crossing over the bridge. In my opinion a full pavement is needed on both sides of the bridge, with traffic controlled by traffic lights on either side. In addition the pavement by Dark Lane neds to be made longer with a drop kerb (school children with scooters, prams etc). Some change is needed as I expect traffic volumes will increase due to the poor public transport for the Village forcing villahgers into cars
* Unfortunately, I do not feel that a yellow box on the bridge will stop some drivers from driving onto it and disregarding the rules, Only with traffic lights will you force cars/trucks to stop. I also feel strongly that road bumps and additional 'school' signs should be put up along either side of the bridge
* I think a box on the bridge is left open to human interpretation which, when rushing, many drivers will ignore, leading to road rage incidents and dangerous driving.
* Traffic lights are much more straightforward for all.
* I don't think people will stop if there is just a yellow box marking on the bridge. Traffic lights are more effective.
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| Greater driver clarity | * Increased safety and reduces the risk of confusion/ hesitation/ potential conflict amongst drivers with the first option.
* Traffic signals give full confidence that traffic understands what to do, especially for drivers not used to the area. It would be safer for children and a more permanent solution.
* Traffic lights are clear and unambiguous. Important that they are able to adjust based on traffic.
* Drivers need to be given firm instructions and expecting all drivers to abide by their own judgement about leaving a box clear doesn't work. Lights are much better
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Suggestions were made:

* Work necessary to avoid a traffic backlog in the High St and, as you approach the bridge, make safe and curb speed at the pavement in the constriction by the high stone wall, as you approach the canal bridge.
* I live on the Normans and when we walk to school the narrow stretch of road before the bridge is just as much of a problem as the bridge with cars regularly going too fast and going on the pavement.
* It more dangerous I think now with the crossing person on the bridge as the angle drivers have to stop at coming up onto the bridge then being stopped half way up/over is then putting cars at risk as both coming from different ways meeting in the middle but Also trying to be watching out on each side for pedestrians. It was so much better with traffic lights and the crossing person at the road by church/George car park as that’s a dangerous road for children crossing on own as cars do not stop! Put the crossing person back there
* I would recommend the lights work in a smart way as not to slow traffic down even more.
* Traffic is too busy next to the school
* There should also be a crossing built into the lights system, so that people, and especially children, travelling to and from Bathampton School froom the direction of the High Street and Bathampton Lane can cross the road at the bridge safely.
* Will there be a safe crossing opportunity on the bridge?
* Additional pedestrian crossing would still be a better option for both pedestrians and traffic flow.

## Reasons for supporting ‘another option’

12.2% supported another option – 6 of 49 responses

**Views given for supporting another option include:**

-Option 2 is better than option 1 but still doesn't offer an LTN 1/20 compliant route through the village. Please look at how to extend this scheme. Children walking to school from the high street won't be able to safely walk to the pavement side of the bridge.

-Option One assumes drivers can see beyond the yellow box and proceed with caution. However, on approaching the bridge no driver can see over it (ie a driver can't see beyond the box to know whether to proceed into it). In addition a yellow box would be a blight in a very beautiful part of our village.

-Option Two would fail to slow down vehicles, and could even be taken by drivers as permission to speed up. Currently drivers approach with caution, whereas a green light tells a driver it is safe to proceed whether they can see clearly or not. In addition there are many tributary roads in the immediate area (my approach is often from Dark Lane) so many different lights would have to be included in the system, making it extremely complicated, and each set of lights would be an blight to a beautiful part of the village.

**Other Options given were:**

-new foot bridge would be the only safe option

-Dedicated foot bridge built otherwise traffic lights

-An Alternative Option would be to use clear "Give Way to On-coming Vehicle" signs in key places, clearly signing which direction of traffic has priority. This would be particularly effective on the blind corner on the approach to the bridge (ie next to Mulberry Nursery). There is a point when approaching traffic have a clearer view of oncoming traffic, where the oncoming traffic can't see so clearly. I have experience of this every day and it works successfully every time I give way to traffic approaching the bridge. Give way signs would help enormously and ensure drivers never have to mount the pavement at that point.

-I think it should be explained first why traffic lights are the only feasible option - is this really the case? If they are then Option 2 will have to be pursued as it is the only one that ensures safety - the primary goal of this area of the scheme.

-Liveable Neighbourhoods needs to be completed before choosing an option.

## Respondents supporting ‘none of these options’

8.2% supported ‘none of these options’ – 4 of 49 responses

**Reasons for supporting ‘none of these options’:**

- I do not believe they will increase pedestrian safety on the canal bridge. Neither appear to directly address safety issues from the pedestrian's perspective. Instead, I am of the view that the Options (particularly Option 2) will increase traffic speeds and volumes (and driving style). Additional reasons include air quality, congestion and other negative impacts elsewhere in the village, and the street scene within the village.

-I don’t think traffic lights or gone way will be helpful in the village, there is already enough build up of traffic at times and both options will cause problems accessing Tyning Rd.

-The traffic lights are likely to cause tailbacks on the narrow section of the High street (eastbound) - this could cause issues with a stand-off of cars queued on the narrow section but unable to advance in either direction. Also might be issues with access to dark lane and to driveways at the bottom of the High street. Thirdly the traffic lights might actually encourage cars to travel faster over the canal bridge itself, defeating the object of the exercise.

-Unfortunately the other option of making the bridge hatched wouldn’t work - the view for the drivers doesn’t allow to see the other dose of the bridge until already committed and the hashing might just cause more confusion for drivers.

**Other Options given were:**

-Making the narrow section at the bottom of the high street more clearly single lane might help, along with streetwear to make appearance more village-like and to discourage the appearance of a thoroughfare.

-Ideally there should be a separate pedestrian bridge if it is recognised that the current situation is unsafe.

-We need the Conker Bridge

**Bathampton Primary Governors Response to the Canal Bridge Consultation**

Bathampton Primary school has been working to improve pedestrian safety on the routes to school since 2016. This has included surveying parents, identifying safety priorities and working with B&NES, the Parish Council and local businesses to plan and fund improvements. The canal bridge was identified from the outset as the most dangerous pinch point on routes to school.

Since 2018, members of the safe routes to school group had been working to community design and bring forward a separate footbridge, the Conker Crossing, for onward detailed design by B&NES, supported by three trustees from within and beyond the school community. The footbridge route was the advice of the then Head of Highways, Kelvin Packer, sponsored by then LibDem Ward Councillor Alison Millar and endorsed by the then Cabinet member for transport, Conservative Councillor Mark Shelford.

The Conker Crossing planning application was permitted but when detailed design came back as deliverable, but unjustifiably expensive, advice was given to re-approach the issue through the Liveable Neighbourhoods Scheme (LNS) for which there is potentially greater funding and, as a scheme, is designed to improve access, safety and the environment in local communities. A first bid, submitted in August 2021 includes the canal bridge for improvement, as well as Down Lane. This bid would be amended, based on the outcome of this consultation, plus further input as to how the High St environment could be improved, before it is developed by B&NES. As Governors, we welcome this first step of consulting on canal bridge safety as part of a Liveable Neighbourhoods scheme.

**For the school community, safety is the overriding priority for this area of the LNS bid, which could include improving signage, measures to slow traffic and allowing safe passage. We recognise that those living close to school should not have their environment worsened through the solution. We also learned during the Cleveland Bridge closure that the solution needs to encompass all approaches to the bridge e.g. the pavement opposite Mulberry Garden nursery, which has cars mounting it regularly. We welcome that this proposal addresses this.**

**With the current consultation focused on traffic flows, it would be ideal to have the civil engineering components on the bridge and the potential High Street improvements considered before a final canal bridge scheme is chosen because of the impact of one set of traffic flows on the other.** We recognise that to do the whole LN scheme upfront might be too time-and-budget-consuming and we are grateful that the scheme has started with the most significant safety issue first.

**Two options have been presented. In both options there would be a permanent single carriageway over the bridge which seems to us to be exactly what is needed. We see that this would significantly change traffic flows and mean that driver priorities would need to be defined.**

**Both options also indicate that pavements and approaches would be improved on either side to protect pedestrians with raised pavements and improved sight lines. This aspect has our full support because protecting pedestrian safety on these pavements is fundamental. The existing pavement presents no obstacles for vehicles mounting it and is already part of the safety problem. We understand that the next step would be to finalise the design.**

**The yellow box in option 1 that leaves priorities up to drivers does not seem sufficiently safe for pedestrians or cyclists because there is not enough protection should drivers inevitably disagree.**

**Option 2, where flow over the bridge is controlled by traffic lights, is the other end of the traffic management spectrum, but it would provide a safer solution on the bridge itself.** **We recognise that this would be a big step in a conservation area.** **This option provides a safer crossing point from the High St pavement to the school side because traffic would be stopped. It could also improve the flow of traffic down the High Street if lights could be set to prioritise High St flow. It would be important that the solution does not worsen air pollution or create unintended consequences on any of the approaching roads. A version of Option 2 using other means of traffic flow control than lights would be worth exploring.**

As Governors, we are grateful that this first consultation step has happened in a post-Covid environment and look forward to helping build a LN solution without delay.