

Belvidere Bridge Update – Report from Cllr Alex Wagner

Background

The Belvidere Bridge is a critical pedestrian and transport link in Shrewsbury. Although it is an important part of the Highway network, it is not a Shropshire Council asset, and responsibility lies with Network Rail, whose co-operation is essential for any improvements.

In good faith, around £250,000 was contributed from the Weir Hill development specifically to support improvements to the bridge, namely to widen it to make two-way traffic possible and pedestrian safety improvements. However, following this commitment and after a significant spend on design, Network Rail have now decided they do not plan to allow work to proceed, citing new requirements.

Network Rail's new requirements include Shropshire Council raising the parapet height as part of their suicide prevention strategy. This is an addition not included or referenced in the original agreement and one that has significantly complicated the project.

Alongside this, the departure of the lead officer from Shropshire Council has prompted a review of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schemes, which identified serious construction and liability risks. These risks present financial challenges and have led to the conclusion that widening the bridge is currently unachievable under Network Rail's conditions.

Shropshire Council has made clear that they are keen to move the issue forward. They recognise the strategic importance of the bridge and the frustration which nearby residents feel caused by the lack of progress, and would like to see the £250,000 put towards the works initially agreed, which would facilitate two-way traffic and significant pedestrian safety improvements.

It should be noted that the future of the Belvidere Bridge is a particularly relevant issue for residents given the news of proposals for an additional 400 houses at Weir Hill which will place significant further strain on the local road network.

The request to put this report to Policy & Resources Committee has come as a result of the news about Network Rail's requirements coming to light just last week at Shropshire Council's Cabinet (9th July 2025), after a question by Column & Sutton councillor Rosemary Dartnell.

Other councillors in the east of Shrewsbury – Jamie Daniels, Adam Fejfer, David Vasmer and Vicky Moore – have also been consulted. They have all expressed their clear support for both Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council taking a strong stance on the Belvidere Bridge issue to move it forward with Network Rail.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Shrewsbury Town Council:

1. Write formally to Network Rail to:
 - Make clear the strategic importance of Belvidere Bridge for movement around Shrewsbury, and the clear expectation residents have of seeing improvements given significant funding has been secured.
 - Reiterate the urgent need for footway widening and safety improvements.
 - Express dissatisfaction with Network Rail's approach, particularly the refusal to proceed after funding was secured through the Weir Hill development.
2. Support Shropshire Council's efforts to re-engage with Network Rail and push for a workable solution to allow traffic and pedestrian safety improvements.
3. Request a collaborative review with Network Rail to explore alternative options that meet both safety standards and community needs.