

## **Pedestrian bridge over Hobson's Conduit: Summary of Community Consultation**

The project for a pedestrian bridge over Hobson's Conduit has been extensively debated over a number of years on the Accordia development and for the past three years more widely with stakeholders and other bodies. The proposal was debated over a series of residents' meetings on Accordia with attendances of 50-70 people (September 2009; October 2010; January 2011). At each of these meetings the case for going ahead with the proposal was endorsed without votes being taken. Our group was asked at the meeting on October 2010 to examine the case for and against constructing a bridge and to report back. We found that the benefits outweighed possible drawbacks. At a full residents' meeting in January 2011, our spokesperson summarised these benefits in a presentation and we circulated a leaflet in a letter-drop across the Accordia development in advance. We also undertook a programme of consultation with stakeholders, statutory authorities and the Bentley Rd / Newton Rd residents' association (BENERA), none of whom opposed the proposal while expressing concerns (mainly for impact on bio-diversity and the potential for increased cycle traffic).

The application for planning approval contained a fuller summary of the evidence and we discussed it at a meeting of the newly established community association (ACRA) on 6 October 2012. A majority of those present were favourable, while 4 people spoke against the proposal. We discussed the evidence with external interested stakeholders and have presented it in the local newspaper, the council's local newsletter and at the south area committee of the City Council in November 2012.

The consultations that were undertaken before the planning application are fully written up in the Design and Access statement on pages 12 to 17 inclusive. This did include consultation on 4 alternative locations for the bridge, which preceded the selection of the one location that was the subject of the planning application. The selected location best met all the criteria, including minimising adverse reaction from nearby residents.

In accordance with normal consultation procedures, the planners gave written notice of the planning application to nearby residents, mainly in Kingfisher Way. Following this, ACRA officers asked for wider consultation, including written notice to all 376 housing units on the Accordia site.

We believe that the consultation process has been very wide and the responses have been carefully considered. The conditions added to the outline planning permission that was granted further serve to meet any objection that may remain, including the provision of a kissing gate to deter cycle traffic. The bridge complies fully with Public Policy; indeed, had the development come up for planning permission today the planners would ask for a bridge to be included to meet requirements of connectivity.

"As Highway Authority responsible for Public Rights of Way in Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire County Council welcomes the improved pedestrian connectivity which would be provided by the proposed bridge over Hobson's Brook. This would help meet the objectives of the Cambridgeshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights/policies/policies/rowip.htm>), the statutory and adopted Policy of the County Council for access to the countryside, open space and green space. The project objectives should also support the objectives of the wider

Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.  
([http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/our\\_challenge/green\\_spaces/](http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/our_challenge/green_spaces/))"

The County Council's walkways manager advised us at the outset to expect opposition to the proposal as this was absolutely normal for all alterations to walkways. The meeting called by the City Council officers to receive comments on which of 4 proposed sites to select, attracted about 30 residents motivated to ensure no bridge was built near them. The final selection of the site most remote from the apartments satisfied most of the objectors. An unreasonably inflammatory notice was sent by the secretary of BENERA to their members asking them to respond to the planning application. However, our ongoing relationship with BENERA reveals that the bridge is not a divisive issue and indeed a number of residents can see that their daily walk to the station could be over the bridge and through Accordia rather than alongside the heavy traffic on Brooklands Avenue. Our attendance at the latest AGM for BENERA (June 11th) confirmed that their committee has no objection to a pedestrian bridge and it does not represent a threat to the green corridor.

Since the approval of the outline planning application there has been continued support in the Accordia community. It is recognised by many that the very well supported and appreciated community involvement in managing and enhancing the green spaces in Accordia is organised by some of the same people that are promoting the building of the bridge.

However, the merits or otherwise of building the bridge should not be measured by a popularity poll. The important balances and advantages to the community at large were assessed through the rigour of the planning process and were found to be in the community interest and so the project was approved.

SOUTH AREA COMMITTEE 19 November 2012  
Application Number 12/1078/OUT

SUMMARY The development accords with the Development Plan for the following reasons:  
The proposed footbridge would not cause harm to the setting of the Green Belt and is in accordance with guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and policy 4/1 of the Cambridge Local Plan;

A limited amount of cycle usage will be inevitable along the existing footpath, but I consider that this does not outweigh the benefit that the link will provide for pedestrians in accordance with policy 8/4 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2006; and I find that on balance the benefits of the bridge outweigh the concerns raised by residents and that in my opinion the proposal adequately respects the residential amenity of its neighbours and the constraints of the site and I consider that it is compliant with and Cambridge Local Plan (2006) policies 3/4 and 3/7.

RECOMMENDATION  
APPROVAL

## STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

Cambridgeshire County Council (Engineering)

The width of the proposed footbridge would make its use suitable only for pedestrians and wheelchair users.

Whilst there may be an aspiration to use the path by cyclists, its benefits to the wider cycling public would seem relatively small, and so whilst a small increase in cycle movements would be likely, the geometry of the link would deter through cycling for any but leisurely cyclists. It should be considered, however that aspirations for improvement of the link, once established, may be engendered. In terms of pedestrian connectivity, however, the route would seem to have significant advantages for residents of the site.

Nature Conservation Projects Officer

The proposed location for the pedestrian bridge confers minimal ecological impact with the loss of only a short section of overgrown bramble and species poor grassland. However, consideration of the impacts of construction on adjacent vegetation and trees is required. Any requests for lighting should be resisted as the Hobsons Conduit provides a route for foraging bat species. To this end a suitable condition preventing future lighting of the bridge might be appropriate.

Environment Agency

No objection.

Hobson's Conduit Trust

The Trust have rights of access to the banks of Hobson's Brook and the design of the bridge should not ensure that access is not obstructed. Neither should the structural integrity of the brook, its banks and bed, be compromised in any way. The design of the bridge has potential

for cycle access and we are concerned that the bridge will increase cycle usage along the banks of the Brook, which is opposed too.

Opposition to any loss of the sense of semi-rural tranquillity on the western edge of the Brook and that a new pedestrian access could endanger that sense, particularly if cycle traffic increases.

The Trust are not opposed to the principle of a bridge, but have major reservations on the likely impacts that the introduction of a bridge shall bring.

Sustainable Drainage Officer

No overall objection, although further details will be required at the detailed design stages.

Arboricultural Officer

Second response 23 October 2012

Following receipt of the tree survey I am satisfied that, provided appropriate tree protection methods are adopted and adhered to, the Accordia bridge can be constructed without material damage to adjacent trees.

There is therefore no arboricultural objection subject to the imposition of an appropriate condition.

Architectural Liaison Officer (Cambridgeshire Constabulary)

To my mind, I would certainly think about what opening the footpath up would mean in terms of permeability. Firstly, I am not aware of any problems associated with the Hobson's Brook footpath or Accordia itself. I would also view closely what is beyond the Accordia site e.g. Newton Road/Bentley Road etc and how residents would feel about this link being opened up. From a policing perspective, crime and disorder is low across both areas. Whilst I don't feel able to support the application, there are no grounds from a crime reduction or community safety perspective to object to the proposal. I would again state that from my view Option 3 provides the best option in terms of surveillance.

**Prepared by Accordia Bridge Group – June 2013**