Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust Planning Application
Replacement of Dilapidated Bridge at Purwell Mill

HMWT-PM-001:
Design & Access Statement
Revision A

Address of site: Bridge at Purwell Mill, Off Purwell Lane, SG4 0NF
Address of HMWT: Grebe House, St Michael's Street, St Albans AL3 4SN
Date: 28/03/2018

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1. Introduction

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) is a charity.
http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/who-we-are

Purwell Ninesprings is a nature reserve inherited and currently maintained by the HMWT and the bridge at Purwell Mill is part of this parcel of land.

A recent structural survey showed that the bridge is in poor condition. Weaknesses resulting from badly constructed widening measures carried out at different times, prior to the Trust's ownership, presumably to keep pace with larger and heavier loads are now failing and the bridge is in need of replacement to ensure the safety of both pedestrians and vehicles which pass over it daily.

2. Background and History

Flood relief pipes were installed to the southern bank of the bridge circa 1996 by the EA. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this improved the flow of the stream in times of flood, but it has done nothing to help the bridge structure. Two culvert pipes had been installed and backfilled with concrete. There are now signs of movement and deterioration to the embankment and various width extensions of the bridge are not sufficiently tied into one another. The structural report on the current state is submitted with this application. Please see document **HMWT-PM-005a & b**.

A current flood map shows that the bridge is at low risk of flooding (doc **HMWT-PM-013**)

The bridge also forms part of public footpath 91. Please see **HMWT-PM-010**
A temporary closure or footpath diversion can be arranged if necessary.

3. Proposal

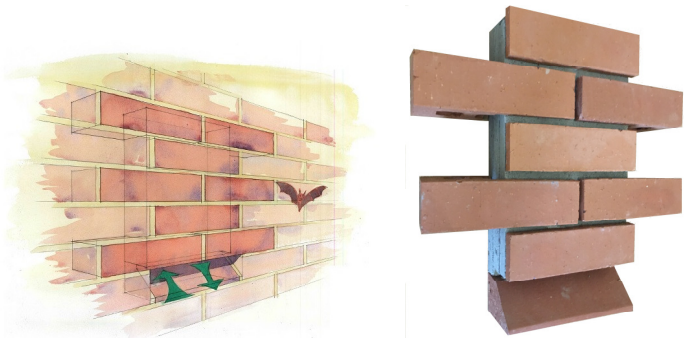
The charity proposes to replace the bridge with a culvert solution including a reinforced concrete walls retaining road stone infill. This will be faced with a brick wall which will be tied into the concrete to resemble the character of the existing bridge and a tarmac road will be laid to highway standards.

The parapets of the bridge will be raised to a minimum of 900mm in matching brickwork. Presently there is no rail to this part of the structure which represents a risk to pedestrians using public footpath 91.

A discreet bat box will be installed at the request of the HMWT:
http://www.habibat.co.uk/category/bat-boxes/habibat-003-bat-box

Please see proposed drawing **HMWT-PM-006** for details.

HABIBAT ACCESS BOX
003



4. Planning Policies

This is an unusual application because:

- The bridge is part of a public footpath
- It is the only vehicular access to the converted properties at Purwell Mill
- It is owned by a third party – The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust who deal with wildlife conservation and have inherited this "asset"
- The bridge is in need of replacement in the interests of public safety.

To this regard, we note the following policies in relation to the design the HMWT have proposed:

National Planning Policy Framework:

We have considered the impact of this proposal on the historic surroundings, the landscape and the community and in particular considered it with the policies of the NPPF page 30 ***"conserving and enhancing the historic environment"***, at the fore front of our minds particularly paragraphs 128 – 141.

The existing bridge serves the listed buildings at Purwell Mill but is not considered a vital heritage asset in its own right.

Its dilapidated state and dangerous condition is described in the structural engineers report contained in this application and necessitates its replacement. Repairs to the existing bridge will not present a sustainable solution as the bridge must support emergency vehicles serving the 7 dwellings at Purwell Mill in addition to day to day access for residents, deliveries, and pedestrians using Hitchin footpath 91.
The engineer's report shows that repair would only be a temporary solution.

We consulted Mark Simmons at the NHDC and his response is included in this application (**Ref: HMWT-PM-011**)
The design presented in this application will provide a structurally compliant, safe and sustainable visually un-harmful answer to the problem presented by the dilapidation of the structure. The design will also minimise the construction period and therefore minimise the impacts to residents and users of the footpath.

With reference to ***"Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment"*** (NPPF paragraph 109): It is raison d'etre of the HMWT to protect and enhance biodiversity and natural landscape. Please see HMWT communications with Herts Ecology (**Ref: HMWT-PM-007a & b**)
No additional lighting will be added.

With reference to ***"Pre-application engagement and front loading"*** *(NPPF paragraph 188-191):* Initial communication with the planning officer concluded that the proposal is not expected to not raise significant planning issues and so the submission of a full planning application was recommended. (Please see doc **Ref: HMWT-PM-012** email from Tom Rea)

North Hertfordshire District Council
District and Local Plan No.2 with Alterations Originally adopted April 1996
Page 6:

Policy 14: Nature Conservation

For Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and sites of local Wildlife Significance, the Council will preserve their wildlife importance by not normally granting planning permission for development proposals in these sites, or which may harm their value, and will seek their continued management for nature conservation.

For sites of Wildlife Value, the Council will not normally grant planning permission for development proposals which do not take account of and encourage the potential nature conservation value of the site.

Elsewhere, or when a development proposal is acceptable, the Council will expect development proposals to take account of, and where possible, to show improvements to the nature conservation value of the site and its surroundings. In addition, the Council may require the preparation and implementation of a management scheme to maintain or enhance the site's nature conservation value.

In this very special circumstance, the HMWT propose a sympathetic and efficient solution to a dilapidated structure. As they are maintaining the wildlife conservation area in public interest, they will ensure that all aspects of biodiversity and existing landscape are respected and protected wherever possible.

Please refer to HMWT comms with Herts Ecology – doc **Ref: HMWT-PM-007**