

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Contract award for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 14 January 2014
Cabinet Member: Councillor Coker
CMT Member: Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
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Ref: 01345-11
Key Decision: Yes
Part: 1

Purpose of the report:

To recommend that Cabinet awards the contract to refurbish Laira Rail Bridge, having regard to the information contained in the private reports referred to separately on the Cabinet agenda.

The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:

Pioneering Plymouth

Laira Rail Bridge is an historic Plymouth landmark which has been lying derelict for over twenty years. Once refurbished to its former glory, it will provide an off-road link between the City and Plymstock, encouraging sustainable travel into and out of the City for commuting, business and recreational purposes.

Growing Plymouth

This project will contribute to this priority by creating an off-road link between the City and proposed new developments in Plymstock Quarry and beyond.

Confident Plymouth

Refurbishing this derelict Victorian asset into once again being a functional structure will engender civic pride in Plymouth's infrastructure and history.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

This project is in the approved Capital Programme 2012 – 15. The capital funding comprises a Plymouth Connect Local Sustainable Transport Fund capital grant, Local Transport Plan capital grant, capital contribution and Section 106 contributions. The main £750,000 Section 106 Contribution which is connected to the Saltram Meadow (Plymstock Quarry) development has not yet been received as it is due on first occupation of the new houses. This is expected during 2014/15. The risk of the funding not being received by the Council is considered to be low due to the significant investment already made by the developer.

Revenue costs estimated at £10,140 per annum equating to £152,100 over 15 years for ongoing maintenance can be met from within the Highway Maintenance revenue budget.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

None

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

To award the contract for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge to South West Highways, following the outcome of the tender evaluation exercise held on 10 December 2013.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

To not award the contract.

This would mean that the project could not proceed and a significant amount of central government funding would have to be returned, including money that has already been spent in developing the project.

Published work / information:**Background papers:**

None

Sign off:

Fin	SG/Place FTC 1314003. 171213	Leg	SC/ 19138	Mon Off	DS/ 19152	HR	n/a	Assets	CJT/ 123/ 171213	IT	n/a	Strat Proc	NA/ SPU/ 343/ CP/ 1213
Originating SMT Member: Clive Perkin													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

1.0 Introduction

Plymouth is planning for large scale residential and employment growth along the Eastern Corridor, the two most significant sites are that of Saltram Meadow (formerly known as Plymstock Quarry) and Sherford New Community. Further employment is proposed at Langage Energy Park.

Development sites along the Eastern Corridor and in the city centre make up 52% of the proposed residential dwellings, 56% of employment space and 72% of retail space of the overall development for the whole city by 2026.

This planned growth will inevitably increase the demand for travel by public transport, walking and cycling and by private car. New and innovative transport solutions are therefore needed to facilitate this growth.

Part of the strategy for facilitating this growth is to provide high quality walking and cycling facilities linking the city centre and the eastern corridor with both on and off-road facilities which are of high quality, fast and convenient.

2.0 Physical Context

The bridge over the River Plym was completed in 1887 with the remainder of the line to Pomphlett not being completed until the following year.

The original function of Laira Rail Bridge was to carry a mineral railway but it was later converted to a branch line of the London and South Western Railway and was opened to passenger trains in 1892 forming an important river crossing between Plymouth and Plymstock. Passenger services ended in the 1950s although freight trains, principally serving the Billacombe Quarry and sidings at Pomphlett, continued to operate until the late 1980s.

Since its closure the bridge has fallen into a state of disrepair and over the years has largely lost its protective paintwork.

Despite its cosmetic appearance, the bridge remains in relatively good structural condition, although there are some isolated areas of significant corrosion present, particularly within the tidal areas of the bridge.

On the western side of the rail bridge, an existing off-road cycleway runs along the alignment of the former Turnchapel branch line. Parallel to this, a second branch line still in use as an active railway provides access for trains to the industrial area of Cattedown.

To the south of rail bridge, a second river crossing carries vehicular traffic over the River Plym along the A379. This is the second bridge located in this area to carry vehicular traffic over the River Plym, the first of which dating back to 1827 was demolished in the 1950's to make way for the current road bridge.

The remnants of the old Laira Road Bridge lay to the south of the rail bridge at the eastern end in the form of the original abutments and limestone facing, which have been left in situ along with a plaque commemorating the opening of the original road bridge. The remainder of the land in this area has been soft landscaped with grass.

At the eastern end of the bridge, the old railway embankment has been dissected by The Ride, which provides access for vehicular traffic to Chelson Meadow Recycling Centre and a gypsy/traveller site, a bus depot and a small number of light industrial units. The Ride also provides pedestrian and cycle access to the Saltram Country Park estate and links to the National Cycle Network (NCN) including the Plym Valley cycle trail.

3.0 Project Objectives

- Provide a high quality dedicated pedestrian and cycling facility utilising the redundant rail bridge.
- Improve walking and cycling connectivity in the area.
- Provide a high quality decorative lighting scheme to highlight key features of the bridge and capture people's imagination to encourage greater use.
- Enable a future bridge over The Ride to come forward at a later date.
- Preserve the heritage value of the existing bridge.

4.0 Project Details

The scheme will restore the redundant Laira Rail Bridge shown in

Figure below, which crosses the River Plym and has been disused for over twenty years since its closure in the late 1980s. This proposal will bring the bridge back into operation as a shared use pedestrian and cycle path, linking to the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 27 which passes through the Saltram Country Park, along with other local routes.



Figure 1 Laira Rail Bridge

The project requires the old rail bridge to be structurally and cosmetically restored and will require a new deck system for pedestrians and cyclists as indicated in Figure 2. The scheme will also provide appropriate street and feature lighting.



Figure 2 Artistic Impression of Refurbished Laira Rail Bridge

A new access ramp will be constructed on the eastern side to link the old rail bridge with the road level at The Ride as illustrated in Figure 3. The design of this ramp enables a new bridge to be constructed over The Ride at a later date, in order to continue the pedestrian/cycle path along the former railway line.

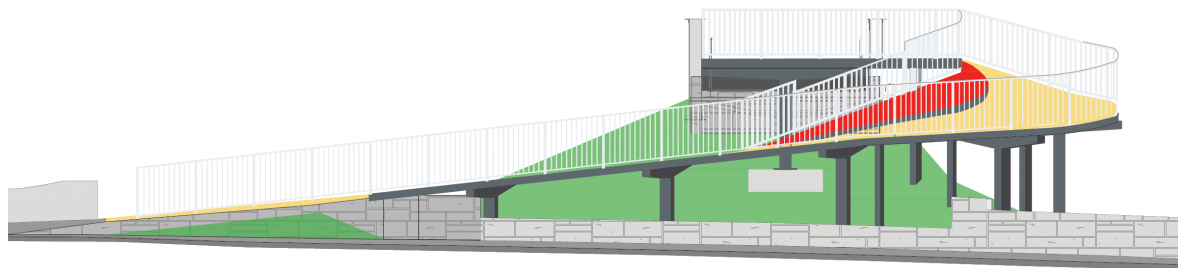


Figure 3 Artistic Impression of Proposed Ramp (View from The Ride)

The approach structure on the western side of the bridge will also be restored in order to link to the existing off-road pedestrian/cycle route which runs along the alignment of the former Turnchapel Branch railway line, to Lucas Terrace / Junction Gardens.