



Report to:	Environment and Neighbourhood Committee	Date:	30 March 2017
Report title:	Petition: Hackbridge Railway Bridge		
Report from:	Mary Morrissey - Strategic Director, Environment, Housing and Regeneration		
Ward/Areas affected:	Borough Wide		
Chair of Committee/Lead Member:	Councillor Jill Whitehead		
Author(s)/Contact Number(s):	Mehmet Mazhar, Service Manager, Traffic Management and Design, 020 8547 5943		
Corporate Plan Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Open Council • A Green Council • A Fair Council • A Smart Council 		
Open/Exempt:	Open		
Signed:		Date:	21 March 2017

1. Summary

- 1.1 To consider a petition from Wandle Valley Forum, submitted to full Council on the 6 March 2017.

2. Recommendations

The Environment and Neighbourhood Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider the petition and the options presented.

3. Background

- 3.1 Councillor Hanna Zuchowska, Wandle Valley ward, submitted a petition on behalf of the Wandle Valley Forum, which has been referred to this committee for consideration.
- 3.2 The petition has 530 signatures and the petition prayer is set out below:

The Hundred Acre and Irrigation Bridges over the railway lines to the North of Hackbridge are being demolished by Network Rail in early 2017. This is despite more than 1000 people signing our petition to have them saved because of the role they can play in providing public access to the newly restored Beddington Farmlands when it opens. The bridges connect a vast



area of green space - three times the size of Hyde Park - right at the heart of the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

We share the dismay at Network Rail's decision and Sutton Council's failure to act to save the existing bridges. We now call upon Sutton Council to commit to supporting construction of a new replacement bridge.

A replacement bridge will help meet the aims of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan being prepared by the Hackbridge community to open up this large area of open space. It will also serve the needs of a new school being built by Sutton Council on open land right next to where a bridge will be needed. We believe it a fitting investment for this key location in the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

- 3.3 In accordance with Part 4E of the Council's Constitution, the scheme for dealing with petitions and e-petitions, states that the spokesperson may talk to the petition for up to 5 minutes and the petition will then be debated.

4. Issues

- 4.1 Both Irrigation Bridge and Hundred Acre Bridge were assets owned by Network Rail. Neither bridge had a recognised 'public right of way' leading to, or over them. Access over the bridges has been physically blocked off with steel barriers and fencing for some considerable time. Before demolition on the weekend of 25/26 February 2017, the bridges were derelict and had fallen into considerable disrepair. Large sections of the parapet walls were missing, the surfacing and brickwork superstructures had been seriously undermined by progressive weathering over the years and the growth of invasive vegetation rooting themselves into the brick structure.
- 4.2 There remain two existing bridges over the Hackbridge railway lines, which are less than a kilometre apart and provide good access across lands on both side of the railway. Merton Footbridge, just to the north of the location of the Hundred Acre Bridge links the Metropolitan Open Lands (MOL), on the west side of the railway line to the Beddington Country Park land on the east side of the railway line, and Mile Road Bridge in Hackbridge itself, links Beddington Country Parks directly into Hackbridge Town Centre via Furlong Close by the Hackbridge roundabout.
- 4.3 The council did investigate the option to restore the bridges and negotiated with Network Rail in this regard. Network Rail's position has consistently been that the bridges had been identified for demolition by them some time ago and they had therefore placed this requirement on their capital programme for demolition. They had delayed the implementation of this decision on a number of occasions on the basis that the Council had approached them with a desire to save the bridges and was exploring potential options to finance the restoration of the bridges back into use for the public. Throughout the negotiations Network Rail confirmed that they neither had the necessary funding, nor the intention, to bring the bridges back into use themselves, as their view was that both assets served no useful purpose to them and were in effect a liability, both in terms of ongoing maintenance costs and potential safety liability. As no viable option had been



identified, in late Summer 2016 Network Rail advised the Council that if the necessary funding could not be found by the Council with which to take on the improvement works and maintenance liability of the bridges by the 26 September 2016, then it would proceed with its plan to demolish the bridges by the end of the 2016/17 fiscal year.

- 4.4 The cost to restore the bridges and to provide accessible footpaths linking Bedzed to the Beddington side was estimated to be in the region of £500k. The Council could not give a commitment to Network Rail that it could provide funding by the deadline. Grant funding and S106 funding was not available, and community grants insufficient. Network Rail therefore implemented its plan and demolished the bridges on the weekend of 25/26 February 2017. The Council shares its disappointment at this outcome with the petitioners.
- 4.5 The petitioners have requested investment is made into providing a replacement bridge to be constructed over the Hackbridge Railway lines in support of the aims of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan being prepared by the community to open up a large area of open space and to serve the needs of a new school being built by the Council nearby. Detailed costings have not been prepared to provide a new bridge. It is however clear that this would require very substantial capital investment to establish safe access in the area and the new bridge itself. This funding is not available in the current economic climate. Bearing in mind the existing and proximate access as described above, the absence of demonstrable need, and the capital and revenue implications the provision of a new bridge is not seen as feasible at this time. The situation could be reviewed again in future should the financial environment change.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The two possible options for the Council are:

Option 1 - To investigate and fund the construction of a new footbridge over the Hackbridge railway lines. Initially a budget would be required to be to fund the feasibility investigation of this option and to prepare some budget estimates based on various concept designs for the Council's consideration.

Option 2 - To not proceed at the current time but to reconsider if opportunities for funding emerge in the future. As previous efforts to secure funding to retain and improve the now demolished bridges was unsuccessful to agree not to commit further resources to this initiative at this time.

6. Impacts and Implications

Financial

- 6.1 Information would be sought on resolution

Legal

- 6.2 Information would be sought on resolution



7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix letter	Title
n/a	

Background documents
Petition received from the Wandle Valley Forum

Audit Trail		
Version	Final	Date: 21 March 2017
Consultation with other officers		
Finance	n/a	n/a
Legal	n/a	n/a
Equality Impact Assessment required?	No	n/a