



**April 2021**

### **Bridgend Town Hall Pedestrian Access Project**

#### **Advice from the Town Clerk, Facilities Manager and Freelance Planning Support regarding the safety and viability of pedestrian access options**

Bridgend Town Council is currently in the process of a major project to repurpose the former registry office at Sunnyside for use as a Town Hall. The new facility will include a public reception area, community rooms, outdoor space for community use, Council chamber, staff offices and a maintenance depot.

Bridgend Town Council envisage a series of changes to the property to accommodate its new functions. This will include reconfiguring the building to create a new main entrance through the current rear garden.

The property has good vehicle access and car-parking facilities but is not easily accessed on foot. Existing pedestrian access is 'informal' via public highways but essentially via the rear lanes of Sunnyside Road and Park Street.

The property needs to be accessible to all local residents however; vehicle access is not an option for all and is not good for the environment. Access can be improved with the provision of a safe, well-lit, disabled access route for wheelchair users, pushchairs and pedestrians.

The site is currently surrounded by a mixture of post/wire fence, hedgerow, brick wall, brick wall with railings of different height and open grassed area with kerb edge.

The project will involve ground works, new pedestrian access through a double-gated entrance and a path that will preserve tree roots. Hedgerows will be retained where possible and gaps in the boundary should be enclosed with metal railings to secure the outdoor community space.

There are two potential options to create a new accessible path to the property:

- To create a North Access through a new gate and path at the most northern point of the curtilage to be accessed from lower Park Street and the lanes at the rear of Park Street and Sunnyside Road.
- To create a Southern Access through a new gate and path at the southern side of the property to be accessed via the Linc Cymru/Wellness Village shared access road and footpath at the south of the site.

The Town Council have considered both options and are strongly in favour of the Northern access, which provides the shortest and most direct route to the property from the Town Centre.

Discussions have been held with the newly appointed architect, Facilities Manager, Town Hall Project Manager and BCBC Officers from the Planning and Highways Departments regarding both options.

Although proposals for a new gate feature and alternative pathway to the building are supported in principle, I need to make Members aware of a number of concerns that have been raised regarding the creation of a new Northern Access:

**Northern Access concerns:**

- Serious safety concerns regarding establishing a pedestrian access route that leads directly on to a highway with poor visibility for oncoming vehicles.
- Safety concerns regarding establishing a pedestrian access route that can only be accessed over a carriageway that is in poor condition to be used as a main thoroughfare and could lead to trips and falls.
- Concerns regarding highway safety, free flow of traffic and air pollution due to the potential for vehicles to stop on Park Street to 'drop off' users of the venue. It has been suggested that this would be more likely for those approaching from Tondur Road/Park Street that do not want to drive around to the main vehicle entrance in Sunnyside. This must not be encouraged due to air pollution issues in this area.
- Concerns regarding the potential for vehicles to drive into the rear lanes to 'drop off' immediately outside the pedestrian entrance to avoid congestion in the car park. This will negatively impact the residents in Sunnyside Road and Park Street that require access to their garages.

Please see email below from the BTC Facilities Manager for your consideration and detailed report attached from the Project Manager (who has been retained to provide freelance planning support).

**Email from BTC Facilities Manager 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Dear Leanne

Following the meeting on Wednesday 14 April with BCBC, I would like to raise my concerns with regard to the proposal to develop a pedestrian access at the northern corner of the site as opposed to other alternatives .

I am concerned that the Town Council could be potentially liable at a later date by establishing a pedestrian access directly on to a highway for a number of reasons:

- The condition of the lane surface – difficult for people with mobility and / or balance problems, pushchairs etc to navigate the uneven surface
- Lack of lighting in this area within the BTC boundary and along the lane
- Poor visibility around the bend – pedestrians exiting the site will almost need to look behind them to both left and right
- Potential for vehicle / pedestrian conflict – risk of children running straight into the lane. Whilst traffic speeds along the lane are generally low, the lack of visibility significantly increases the risk of harm to pedestrians
- Installation of new access will require reduction in on-site parking
- On-site access route will also increase potential vehicle and pedestrian conflict within the BTC site boundary and will require greater level of traffic management implications
- Greater environmental impact due to greater loss of trees and green space

Whilst I fully support the Council's point of supporting the Town Centre and making pedestrian access to the site as straightforward as possible I strongly believe that a pedestrian access at the northern point of the site is a greater risk to all users and thereby both a financial and legal risk to the Council in the long term and I would request that the Council consider the Maesteg Comprehensive case for consideration. Whilst this related to an on-site incident it resulted in the death of a student in a low traffic and low traffic speed area and the Council

were criticised for the poor design when considering potential traffic management issues which resulted in HSE involvement and the local authority being fined £300,000. Unfortunately I am unable to access any formal reports in relation to this case but have attached a couple of links for information.

[https://resources.hse.gov.uk/convictions-history/case/case\\_details.asp?SF=CN&SV=4539898](https://resources.hse.gov.uk/convictions-history/case/case_details.asp?SF=CN&SV=4539898)

<https://localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/litigation-and-enforcement/400-litigation-news/39343-2018-11-08-14-01-13>

As Facilities Officer and as Acting Manager there is a requirement that I aid the Council in ensuring that we provide a safe environment for all users of Town Council buildings. I believe there are other options which provide safer (though possibly less convenient) alternatives to all our stakeholders.

### **Rhiannon Stone**

Acting Facilities Manager/Facilities Officer

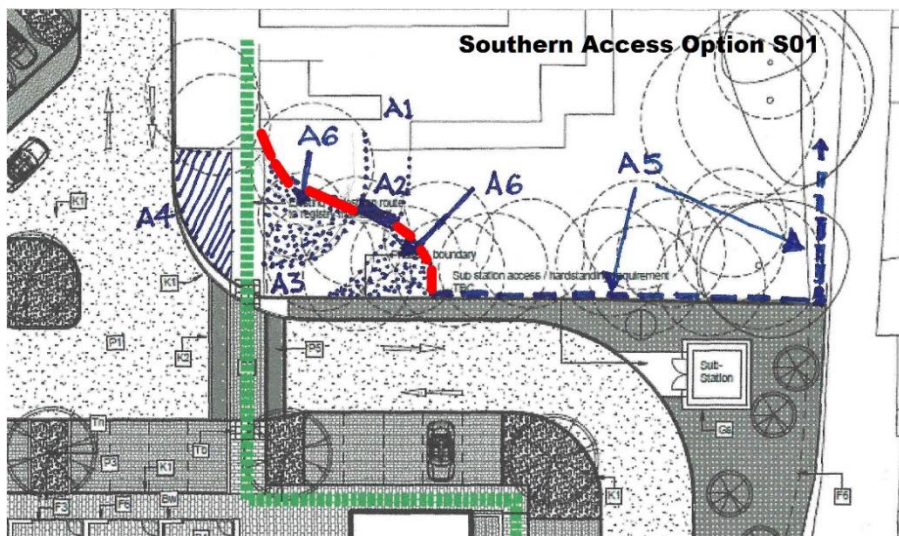
### **Town Clerk Advice to Council**

In light of the information provided above in relation to serious safety concerns, I do not recommend progressing with a new access route at the most northern curtilage of the site.

As an alternative, I suggest that the Town Council re-consider creating a new entrance to the property at the south side of the property.

### **Alternative Southern Access**

There is a potential to create a new safer entrance and pathway through to the Town Hall gardens at the southern side of the property. This would be accessed via the shared access road off Sunnyside Road, which will feature a new pavement and two crossing points. The gated entrance could be located near the area labelled A2 on the diagram below:



### **Planning application or Permitted Development**

It has been established that the Town Council may not require planning permission for the creation of a new gated entrance and pathway to the Town Hall either at the northern or southern side of the property.

In order to determine whether the project could be undertaken using permitted development, the Town Clerk would need to write to BCBC with further details of the chosen scheme. BCBC would then evaluate the proposal and advise accordingly.

BCBC have advised that works in the area of the proposed Northern Access will need a licence to work in the highway from Streetworks.

**Leanne Edwards**  
**Town Clerk**