1. Introduction

1.1 I seek your approval to implement a 3 tonne weight limit on Albert Bridge, subject to the statutory procedures and consideration of any objections the Council may receive during the statutory consultation process.

2. Background

2.1 Albert Bridge was first opened to traffic in September 1873. The structure is a suspension bridge with wrought iron girders. The girders support baulk timbers which in turn support the carriageway and footway finishings. Because of its unusual design and aesthetics the bridge was listed in April 1969.

2.2 Since the early 1900s there has been a weight restriction in place on the bridge. In 1970 the Greater London Council (GLC) imposed a 2 tonne weight limit on the bridge to reduce the number of ‘overweight’ vehicles. The weight limit was imposed by signs on the approach to the bridge. Following the demise of the GLC in 1986 the responsibility for maintaining Albert Bridge was passed to the Council. We introduced the existing 6’ 6” (1.98m) width restrictions in 1992 to help enforce the weight limit.

2.3 In July 2006, following an adverse structural survey of the bridge, officers brought a paper to Cabinet giving Members options to keep the bridge open to traffic. Cabinet decided to implement one lane in each direction across the bridge and to protect the vulnerable footways from vehicle loading by installing red and white barriers along the kerb line with a weight limit of 2.5 tonnes. These were seen as temporary measures until the bridge could be strengthened.

2.4 In September 2007, the lead member signed a Key Decision Report to strengthen and refurbish the bridge to 7.5 tonnes vehicle
capacity. This gave the best value for money with the maximum strengthening for the available budget. It also minimised the visual changes to the existing fabric of the bridge.

2.5 In December 2009 the Council awarded the contract for the major strengthening and repairs of Albert Bridge to Interserve Project Services Ltd. The works started in February 2010 and are scheduled to be completed this year.

3. **Need**

3.1 A 2.5 Tonne weight limit is not a permitted variant on a weak bridge within the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions Manual. A width restriction of 6’6” is normally associated with a 3 tonne weight limit.

3.2 This paper proposes increasing the weight limit on Albert Bridge to 3 tonne, which is a permitted sign within the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions Manual and will make it clearer to drivers which classes of vehicles fall above this weight. The 3 tonne weight limit would not allow buses or Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) to use the bridge, but would allow passage to small service vehicles and ‘white vans’.

4. **Proposals**

4.1 In order to enforce the weight limit we will have to keep a 6’6” width restriction on both sides of the bridge to stop HGVs driving on to the bridge. Before we put width restrictions on the bridge the 2.5 tonne weight limit was regularly abused by motorists and it was evident that the Council could not rely on police enforcement for the restriction. In effect, this means that the same vehicles will be able to use the bridge, and the same range of vehicles will be excluded from the bridge as before the bridge closed in 2010, as the width restrictions enforce the weight restriction.

4.2 A 3 tonne weight limit allows a residual strength in the structure if the weight limit is abused by larger or heavier vehicles.

4.3 The risk of impact and damage to the parapets by HGVs is reduced by physically preventing overweight vehicles from using the bridge. The width restriction will continue to be self enforcing as before.

4.4 The proposed final layout is shown in Appendix 1. We will also retain the 4.2 metre lane widths in each direction which will allow sufficient space for cyclists.
5. **Options**

Option 1

5.1 We could leave the existing 2.5 tonne weight limit in place once the bridge is reopened. **I do not recommend this option** because a 2.5 tonne weight limit, would not be appropriate as many private cars either are, or have potential to be over 2.5 tonnes, making it difficult to enforce with the existing width restrictions.

Option 2

5.2 We prepare and advertise a traffic order for a 3.0 tonne weight limit for Albert Bridge. **This is the option I recommend.**

6. **Consultation**

6.1 Consultation is required with the London Borough of Wandsworth, whose roads are affected south of the bridge, and Transport for London, as they are the highway authority for the highway directly north of the bridge, Chelsea Embankment and Battersea Bridge.

6.2 In order to make the changes to the weight limit, we need to prepare a Traffic Regulation Order under Section 6 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. We will need to make changes to the signage on the approaches to the bridge and this will be covered under a Section 8 Agreement under the Highways Act 1980, with both TfL and the London Borough of Wandsworth. Because the Royal Borough is Traffic Authority for the bridge we have to make the Traffic Regulation Order.

6.3 The London Borough of Wandsworth agreed in principle to enter into a Section 8 agreement with us to facilitate the requisite changes to the signage. It has also agreed to make a joint traffic order pursuant to Section 6 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act. This will need their Members’ approval for the agreement and joint order.

6.4 Transport for London has been consulted on the proposal, and has not raised any concerns.

6.5 There are fifteen signs that will need to be altered to show the 3 Tonne weight limit, nine within Wandsworth and six with Kensington and Chelsea. It is anticipated that an overlay can be applied to the majority of the existing signs rather than replacing them all. The work on our neighbouring authority’s network will be the subject of a Section 8 agreement.
6.6 If the proposal is approved, the statutory procedures governing the introduction of changes require the Council to place a public notice in a local newspaper (Kensington Chronicle) and the London Gazette, and for us to put similar notices in the street. We can also deliver notices to premises likely to be affected, if we think it appropriate to do so. All the notices explain the proposals and invite comment or objection from any interested party by a specified date, or within 21 days.

7. **Traffic Management Act 2004**

7.1 The proposals in this report meet the requirements of the Network Management Duty as set out in Part 2 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

8. **Financial, Legal, Sustainability, Risk, Personnel and/or Equalities Implications**

8.1 The changes to the signage, the Section 8 Agreements and preparation of the order will cost approximately £7,000 and will be paid for from the traffic revenue budget.

8.2 **Legal comments**
The Council needs to comply with the statutory requirements of the Local Authorities’ Traffic Order (Procedure) Regulations 1996, regarding consultation and publication. The Council also needs to consider any objections received as a result of this process before deciding whether or not to make the order.

9. **Recommendations**

9.1 I recommend that you agree to Option 2 as set out in section 5 of this report.

Mahmood Siddiqi
Head of Highways and Traffic

Tot Brill
Executive Director of Transport, Environment and Leisure Services
**FOR COMPLETION BY AUTHOR OF REPORT:**

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**FOR COMPLETION BY GOVERNANCE SERVICES:**

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