



Historic England

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Our ref: L01567892

14 November 2023

Dear Mr Daniel

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021

OVERBRIDGE RIDGE ROAD A656 GARFORTH LEEDS LS25 4BB Application No. 23/04390/LI

Thank you for your letter of 31 October 2023 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

The original Leeds to Selby Railway of 1830-34 is one of the earliest railways in the world. It is a key part of the first 'pioneering' phase of the railway network. Ridge Road Bridge is a quarry-faced limestone and sandstone road bridge that was built as part of the first phase of the Leeds to Selby Railway and designed by the nationally significant railway engineer James Walker, his early railway bridges on the line sharing a common design.

The demolition of the Ridge Road Bridge will result in substantial harm to its significance and cause harm to the historic interest of the Leeds to Selby line as a whole. The demolition of the bridge is necessary to allow the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) which will electrify the route to improve journey times and reduce carbon emissions.

We have been involved in detailed pre-application discussions regarding the TransPennine Upgrade for several years. We have worked closely with Network Rail, their heritage consultants and your Conservation Officer, to interrogate the justification and to explore ways to mitigate the harm and to maximise public benefits through a quality design that re-uses historic fabric as much as possible.

We therefore do not object to the application and consider that the proposal addresses the requirements of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation



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Areas) Act 1990 to have 'special regard' to the listed building and Chapters 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), subject to the advice below being taking into account.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The TransPennine Route has evolved from an historic network of railways, principally the Leeds to Selby Railway which was conceived and built in the 1830s. It was constructed at the start of the Railway Age, conceived prior to the completion of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Being completed prior to the railway mania of the 1840s and 50s, it represents a significant heritage asset in its own right.

Ridge Road Bridge has historic interest as part of the original Leeds to Selby Railway. This interest is reinforced by its association with the renowned engineer James Walker who constructed a pioneering railway intended for four tracks, despite only two ever being installed, leading to its unusual design.

Ridge Road Bridge exhibits a high level of craftsmanship, with attention to detail in ashlar voussoirs and notably its pronounced tooling and curved piers to its parapet. The semi-elliptical 'basket' arch is unique to the Leeds to Selby line and represents a feat of engineering specifically designed for their location.

The bridge is Grade II listed in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest at a national level. The bridge was listed in 2015 after a comprehensive review of the line.

Originally there were 43 bridges across the Leeds to Selby route. The eleven which survive largely unaltered have been designated as grade II listed buildings (4.25, p.13-14 of the Heritage Assessment). The bridges are united in architectural style, materials and execution and epitomise the work of renowned railway engineer James Walker. As such they contribute to the significance of the railway as an asset in its own right. Their group value is considered to enhance their significance.

The proposal

It is proposed to demolish and rebuild Ridge Road Bridge because it is not possible to achieve the clearance required for the OLE (overhead line equipment) due to the position of the track in relation to the bridge structure. A detailed options appraisal concluded that demolition and rebuilding is the most practical, cost and time efficient option.

Impact



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The demolition of Ridge Road, will cause substantial harm to its significance and cause harm to the historic interest of the TransPennine Route as a whole.

The scheme will diminish the group value of the historic bridges on the Leeds to Selby Railway. Overall, the loss of three of the thirteen basket arch bridges which survive along the route will be required. Therefore, when considering the impact of the loss of this Grade II listed structure, consideration should also be given to the cumulative impacts resulting in works to other listed structures.

Should demolition be accepted, we urge your authority ensure that conditions are attached to the consent to mitigate and then compensate for the harm to heritage significance as far as possible. This will take the form of a detailed archaeological record of the listed structure and the re-use of the historic fabric for the works, such as raising the parapets, of this first of all and then other listed bridges on the route.

The design of the replacement bridge should also be of the highest quality. The proposal is to create a feature structure of stone and weathered steel. The design will repeat the basket arch profile of the historic structure with a new weathered steel arch at a higher level. This will be attached to stone abutments, replacing the existing stonework. The parapet will also be of stone, using the stonework taken from the historic structure.

Policy

Substantial harm to, or loss of, a Grade II listed building should be exceptional (para 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF) and 'any harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets should require a clear and convincing justification'.

The NPPF (para 201) advises local planning authorities to refuse consent for works that would cause substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, unless that substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

Para 205 of the NPPF calls for local planning authorities to require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

In addition to Chapter 16 of the NPPF, we refer you to Chapter 12 'Achieving well designed places' when considering the design for the replacement bridge structure. .



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Para 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape;
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

Position

The proposed demolition of the Ridge Road Bridge is extremely regrettable. However, we understand that without this loss the upgrading of the TransPennine Route and all of the public benefits that go with it, would not be possible. We also note the efforts that have been made by the applicant to understand the heritage significance of the bridge itself and its group value as part of the wider historic railway route. Overall, when considering this application holistically with the TransPennine Route Upgrade scheme, we do not object to the application.

If minded to accept the proposal, the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service (WYAS) has provided detailed comments on this application and we fully support their engagement with the suggested condition for historic structures recording (number 4). A full and detailed recording of the listed structure will be of vital importance, given that there will be total loss.

Recommendation

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 130, 200, 201 and 205 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the



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application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Kerry Babington

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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cc:



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