

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for informing the Georgian Group of a proposal to demolish the grade II listed Austhorpe Lane Overbridge, Crossgates, Leeds. The Group wishes to forward the following brief comments on this proposal.

The grit stone and ashlar single-span road bridge was built as part of the first phase of the Leeds to Selby Railway c1830-34 and designed by the nationally significant railway engineer James Walker. The proposed works will result in the total loss of this listed structure's significance and, therefore, should clearly be regarded as constituting substantial harm as set out within the NPPF. The demolition of the bridge is also likely to have a detrimental impact on the group value of the other listed structures and non-designated heritage assets along the Leeds to Selby railway line which is one of the country's earliest.

When making a decision on all listed building consent applications or any decision on a planning application for development that affects a listed building or its setting, a local planning authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This obligation, found in sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (1), applies to all decisions concerning listed buildings. The NPPF directs that "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance" (paragraph 199). The NPPF also directs that "Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification" and that the substantial harm to, or the total loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional.

The NPPF also stipulates that "where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits. In this case it is proposed to demolish and rebuild Austhorpe Lane Overbridge because it is not possible to achieve the clearance required for the overhead line equipment due to the position of the track in relation to the bridge structure. A detailed options appraisal having concluded that demolition and rebuilding is the most practical, cost and time efficient option to meet the Government's aim of providing faster and more energy efficient trains which will contribute to climate change targets. The Heritage Statement provided concludes that the substantial harm that will be caused to this and two other nationally designated assets will be outweighed by the substantial public benefits the improvements to the line will bring.

In this case the applicant has provided a clear case as to why they believe the proposed demolition of this grade II structure is necessary in order to meet the substantial public benefits outlined. In order to grant consent your authority must be satisfied that the identified public benefits are deliverable, and that there are no other economically viable or practical ways of delivering them which will cause a lesser degree of harm than that proposed within this application for listed building consent.

Yours Faithfully