

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

Lock 3 Ashton Canal

**Alteration to lock chamber ladders and
replacement of steel balance beams
with oak.**



May 2022

Canal & River Trust

Submission by Judy Jones BA(Hons) MA IHBC, Heritage Advisor

OVERVIEW

This statement has been prepared to support a Listed Building application by the Canal & River Trust for alterations to the two existing lock ladders and the installation of replacement head lock gates with oak balance beams.

This statement aims to provide supporting information about the historic character of the lock, the methodology of the proposal and to address the relevant impact of the development on this designated asset.

Lock 3 is a Grade II Listed structure.



LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The lock is the 3rd lock on the Ashton Canal. It is located to the south of Old Mill Street, and adjacent to the Chips Building in Manchester.

Easting 385488
Northing 398327

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Listed Building application concerns the following –

- **The extension to the 2 existing lock ladders and their lock chamber recesses.**
- **Replacement head gates to include new oak balance beams to replace the existing steel variation.**

NB other like for like works to be included during the stoppage and noted here for completeness.

- **Repair and re-point the lock chamber brickwork.**
- **Repair offside lock tail quadrant.**
- **Minor timber repairs to the tail gates.**

APPLICANT

Canal & River Trust

STATEMENT PREPARED BY

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Background history of the Ashton Canal and Lock 3

Lock 3 Ashton Canal is Grade II listed.

The Ashton Canal was promoted to carry coal from the mines of Ashton and Oldham to Manchester. In 1792 an Act of Parliament was lodged to create a company to be called the Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne and Oldham Canal, with the original scheme completed in 1796, running from a large basin behind what is now Piccadilly Station in Manchester, and climbing gradually eastwards via 18 locks to Fairfield, Droylesden.

In the first half of the 19th century the Ashton Canal prospered, traffic being so great that the company started to convert the locks into double (twin) locks, although they only completed the two Fairfield locks, 17 and 18. However, the coming of the Railway Age saw a loss of trade for the canals. In 1848, the railway, now the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, bought the Ashton, Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canals in order to feed goods into their railway system.

The canal continued to be utilised for the transport of substantial amounts of coal and other products until the early 20th century, but during this period many of the mines served closed whilst the other main trade of textiles was also in steep decline, this being illustrated by the drop in goods carried on the Ashton Canal, which fell from 50,000 tons in 1933 to just 7 tons in 1955.

The various branches of the Ashton Canal closed in sections between 1932 and 1962, and due to the drop in trade it appeared that the Ashton Mainline would follow rapidly after these closures. However, in 1964, the Peak Forest Canal Society was formed and, with the Inland Waterways Association, fought to keep the Peak Forest and Ashton Canals open and to restore them.

Following discussions between the relevant local authorities and the Canal Societies in 1971 the canal was given a reprieve and restoration was approved, over the next two years with volunteer help and mechanical plant, the whole canal was cleared and restored, finally being re-opened for navigation during 1974.

Since then, the use of the canal network for leisure has developed and the Ashton Canal is an important link in the Cheshire Ring.

Significance of the Heritage Asset

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 provides the Government's national planning policy of the conservation of the historic environment, in respect of information requirements it sets out that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'

It is therefore accepted that in order for the LPA to consider this application it is necessary for the applicant to provide a detailed description and justification of the works.

Assessment of significance

The April 2008 'Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance', published by English Heritage (now Historic England), states that 'understanding the significance of places is vital' and that 'articulating the values and significance ... is necessary to inform decisions about the future '

The English Heritage/Historic England guidance describes a range of inter-related 'heritage values' that may be attached to historic places, arranged in four groups:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative;
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience of memory.

The lock has **Historical value**, as it forms part of the historic national canal network.

It is one of the locks forming part of what is known as the Cheshire Ring. It is a busy cruising waterway and therefore must feature in the memory of those who live, work and not least cruise in the locality. Therefore the lock is of both **Evidential and Communal value**.

Statutory List Description

The lock is a Grade 2 listed asset. The list description reads –

SJ8598, ASHTON CANAL, Beswick And Clayton, 698-1/17/511

Lock No. 3, on south side of Ancoats Hospital

GV

II

Canal lock. c.1792-1799, for Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal Company; renovated. Large blocks of millstone grit, wooden gates. Narrow type (chamber 7 feet wide), with covered overflow channel on south side; stone staircases flanking lower entry at west end, convex curved retaining wall at east end of south side. Third in a series of 13 similar locks, all in working order.

Listing NGR: SJ8548598324



Reasoning for the proposed works

- **The extension to the 2 existing lock ladders and their lock chamber recesses.**

The extension to the two existing lock ladders will ensure that anyone who has fallen into the lock can get a foothold to climb the ladder to safety.

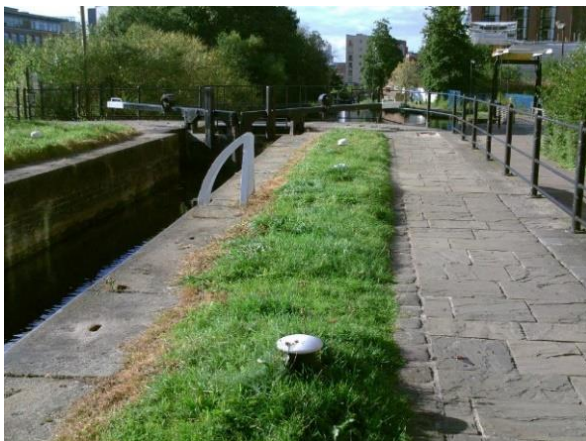
The lock ladder is primarily required to allow a person to escape after falling into the water. However, it must be recognised that ladders are occasionally used in normal lock operation, particularly by single handed boaters, so they need to be safe to use on an everyday basis.

The proposal to extend the existing two ladders at Lock 2 is in line with Canal & River Trust best practice and adopted national safety standards, which show that the bottom rung should be at least 900mm below the lowest water level, so that someone in the water can gain a foot hold to assist their escape. The existing ladders at Lock 2 fail this test and so it is proposed to extend both to reach 900mm below water level.

These standards have been prepared taking into account the evolution of the canal network from a commercial/industrial network, to one with a more leisure orientation. Historically users would have significant experience of utilising canal infrastructure as part of their everyday employment; these additional safety features allow ease of operation for users who are less experienced in infrastructure operation.

The locks along the Ashton Canal have a simple character, being formed of brickwork and squared dressed sandstone block chambers. The locks have evolved a great deal over time, but retain much original fabric and historic character. The ladders are however a 20th century installation, as historically a boater falling into the lock would have had to use the lock gates as a means of escape.

The ladder itself will be extended in metal to match the existing design. The chamber wall will require cutting to create a recess to match the existing. This work will be finished by hand and all joints will be repointed in a suitable lime mortar with a recessed finish.



- **Replacement head gates to include new oak balance beams to replace the existing steel variation.**

This element of the application concerns the replacement of the timber gates and their modern steel balance beams with more historically appropriate gates with timber balance beams. The gates will be manufactured by Canal & River Trust's own workshop.

Lock gates are replaced on a 25 year or so cycle. This is to remove failing timber and ensure the gates seal against leakage when closed and are sufficiently easy for customers to operate.

Just the head a tail gates at Lock 3 require replacement and whilst the gates themselves will be like for like, we are proposing to replace the steel beams with more historically sympathetic oak beams.

The conservation philosophy has been considered before the submission of this application. The use of steel as opposed to timber for balance beams on this canal could be viewed as a technological development and therefore holds some evidential significance.

Timber would have been used for any replacement beams but during a less enlightened period in the mid-late C20th, the beams at some of the Ashton Canal locks were replaced with an inappropriate material, anecdotally due to the rise in antisocial behaviour and the risk of the beams being set on fire.

The installation of oak gates with oak balance beams will enhance the listed asset and be aesthetically more pleasing.

Discussions on the above proposals in 2016 with John Whyard, Conservation Officer with MCC, agreed that:

The steel beams do not represent the original form of the timber gates and so there would be a conservation justification for the appropriate replacement with timber using remaining original/historic timber versions of the gates nearby on the canal as a template.

It was agreed that in conservation terms, the steel beams themselves represent an historic change so could be seen as having heritage significance but a possible solution to reconcile these issues would be to retain one pair of the altered gates on the Ashton Canal as a representative example of such past change but restore those other gates where steel has previously been introduced back to timber balance beams. Based on this, it seems sensible to restore the city centre locks to their original form, and retain one steel set beyond the city.

Head gate replacement



Lock gate replacement is normally carried out on an approximate 25 year rota. As the timber lock gates now require replacement, it has been seen as an opportunity to replace the non-historic steel beams with oak beams.

Other repair works to be included during the stoppage and noted here for completeness.

- **Restoration to tail quadrants**

Restoration of tail quadrants

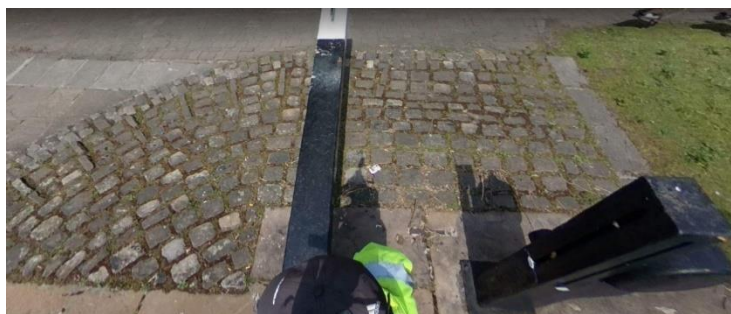


The existing tail quadrants have been poorly repaired in the past using tegula cobbles which have now failed.

The quadrants are to be re-laid with stone setts to match those more historically correct at the head of the lock as shown below.

Raised foot-grips formed with stone setts are to be provided on the tail quadrant and are to sit 25mm proud of the surrounding setts.

Setts are to be matched in terms of size, colour, type and pattern.



- **Minor timber repairs to the tail gates on a like for like basis.**

PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH TO CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

The principle behind the alterations is to improve the operation and safety for those using the Ashton Canal.

KEY ACCESS ISSUES

The works will improve access for canal users as it should increase the safety of this section of the canal.

COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING A RELEVANT DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

It is confirmed that the issue of access will be considered throughout the development and constructional phases of this project.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed replacement of the steel balance beams with oak beams is an enhancement. The extension of the metal lock ladders, to match the existing, is a minor alteration and will not have a deleterious effect on the character of the designated lock. It is therefore respectfully requested that this application is approved.

