



Ms Sophie Wardell
The National Trust

Direct Dial: 0161 242 1445

Our ref: PA01161290
22 July 2021

Dear Ms Wardell

CASTLEFIELD VIADUCT PARK PROPOSALS, CASTLEFIELD, MANCHESTER

Thank you for providing Historic England with the opportunity to comment on your proposals for the reuse of an element of Castlefield Viaduct - a Grade II listed structure - that has lain vacant for more than 50 years. We are pleased to provide comments on these exciting proposals for the reuse of this structure.

Context

Castlefield Railway Viaduct (c1880) extends from Manchester Central broadly west to Dawson St, on the periphery of Manchester city centre. It begins as one structure, dividing into two over Castlefield and rejoining west of the River Medlock; with your proposals relating to the northerly section through the area comprising the divide.

This part of the structure has cast iron drum piers rising to square castellated towers supporting a metal lattice parapet; the castellated towers paying homage to Castlefield's Roman fort, Mamucium (AD79), the first definite record of human settlement in Manchester, with the 'remains of eastern wall of the Roman fort' designated as a Scheduled Monument (SAM).

The viaduct is sited within Castlefield conservation area (designated 1979), host to a significant number of designated heritage assets. These are notably associated with canal and rail infrastructure (four viaducts converge over the site of the Roman fort) and related industry (particularly warehousing), including high grade assets connected with Liverpool Road station (infrastructure and warehousing) and the Church of St George.

Proposals

We note that you are proposing works in two phases: phase 1, the pilot, a temporary park to be opened next summer, with all interventions demountable and no changes to the Grade II listed structure; and phase 2, your slightly longer term ambition that will be informed by the pilot. At this point in time we are providing comments on the principle of the reuse, and plans associated with the pilot temporary park (phase 1), of which we have had sight of.

Principle



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This part of the Castlefield Viaduct was last used in 1969. Historic England supports the principle of the retention and sympathetic repurposing of vacant and underutilised heritage assets, enhancement of their significance and putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation.

This project, which reimagines the space as a linear park, offers a significant opportunity to creatively reuse this derelict viaduct, and not only celebrate its transport heritage, but afford appreciation of the wider conservation area, including Manchester's Roman history, its canal infrastructure and industrial heritage.

The park has clear place-shaping potential with a strong heritage focus, supporting appreciation of and connection with heritage, consistent with Historic England's ambitions to help people better connect with heritage. It will also introduce further green space into the city as a resource for residents and visitors alike. The wellbeing benefits of green space and views of green infrastructure are widely acknowledged, which has only been heightened by the current pandemic, particularly in our cities.

We welcome National Trust having commissioned a statement of heritage significance. In bringing forward a successful scheme, the starting point should always be the development of a full understanding of the heritage interest and significance of the heritage asset. This approach best enables an asset to be adapted to the proposed use in a way that keeps its heritage value intact. We note that your heritage statement does not form part of the consultation material at this stage, and so we would guide you to our advice note on Statements of Heritage Significance (HEAN12), which is available here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/statements-heritage-significance-advice-note-12/heag279-statements-heritage-significance/>

Phase 1:

Technical

There are no changes to the structure planned, so we suggest that your team just need to make sure it is structurally sound in terms of loading for x number of people, plants, seating etc that will need to be accommodated. We recommend that your engineers undertake load-bearing and engineering assessments to make sure it is structurally sound after a period of being out of use.

Drainage needs will need to be considered at an early stage in the project. Any plants, rainwater and toilets will need a drainage system so runoff has somewhere to go, and so as not to flood the structure or the area below at ground level.

This site is very close to the Roman fort. You will need to make sure any usage/access/drainage/potential flooding does not interfere with the Scheduled Monument. Your team will need to consider at the design stage that any current



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drainage system may need to be refreshed/upgraded to ensure there are no intrusions below ground that would trigger mitigation by the local authority.

Our assumption is that the access walkway and lift are as existing for phase 1. If this is not the case, there may be repercussions for the SAM that will need to be considered, given their close proximity.

Design

The masterplan (layout plan) shows only part of this element of the viaduct opened for pedestrian traffic, with the entrance and exit taken from one end of the space. We would query whether there are longer term ambitions (perhaps as part of to phase 2) to extend the space to the full length of this unique section of the viaduct? Additionally, whether consideration has been given to facilitating entrance at both ends in the longer-term, to widen the park's appeal and usage, not just as a destination, but as a place that connects with other places?

The entrance into the space is located adjacent to Castlefield Urban Park, which includes the reconstructed part of the Roman fort (on excavated foundations). We acknowledge the benefits of linkage into these existing green spaces; and particularly enhanced interaction with the city's Roman heritage with a new attraction accessed through the Park. On a related point, we would like to understand how the entrance to the park will be signed, with the lift and stair not being especially legible in their existing form?

With regard to proposed planting and the associated new structure introduced, provided that these are contained largely behind the metal latticework parapet of the viaduct and sympathetic materials are used, there is unlikely to be any significant adverse visual effect on other nearby designated heritage assets.

We welcome your focus on bringing the heritage of the viaduct to life thorough interpretation and tours; but recommend that this is extended to enable wider appreciating of the many heritage assets in the surrounding area. Visuals available to date centre on views within the space, rather than views out, and we would like to see the project embrace its context. The structure has the potential to provide elevated views of the wider Castlefield conservation area and beyond, including the city's ever-changing skyline. We would welcome your exploration of potential dwelling spaces along the structure, carefully positioned to highlight significant buildings, structures or views, with appropriate interpretation.

To conclude, Historic England welcome your ambitions to reuse this underutilised designated heritage asset, enhance appreciation of it; and help maintain Castlefield Viaduct in viable use for future generations. We look forward to working with you on the pilot and as the scheme progresses through phase 2.





Historic England

Yours sincerely

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