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LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

Lock 15 Ashton Canal

Lock gate replacement.
Alterations to balance beams and gearing to bottom lock gates



April 2021

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 the alteration of both bottom lock gates at Lock 15. The metal balance beams will be replaced with oak balance beams and the hydraulic gearing will be replaced with manual gearing.

The alterations will remove late 20th C alterations which are neither historically correct nor aesthetically pleasing to the special character of the lock.

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 15 is a Grade ll Listed structure.

LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The lock is the 15th lock on the Ashton Canal. It is located 100m west of Edge Lane, Openshaw.

Easting 389029
Northing 398026

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Listed Building application concerns the following –

- **alteration of bottom lock balance beams and alteration of gearing.**

APPLICANT

Canal & River Trust

STATEMENT PREPARED BY

Prepared by:

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

Canal & River Trust, Fearns Wharf, Neptune Street, Leeds LS9 8PB

Tel: 0113 281 6821 Mob: 07920532656 Email: judy.jones@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Background history of the Ashton Canal and Lock 15

Lock 15 on the 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 his 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**.

The lock was constructed in the late 18th C. The lock gates would most certainly have originally been constructed in oak, but were changed to steel in the mid to late C20th.

Statutory List Description

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

ASHTON CANAL LOCK NUMBER 15 APPROXIMATELY 100 METRES WEST OF EDGE LANE

SJ89NE ASHTON CANAL, Beswick And Clayton 698-1/5/523 Lock No.15, approx. 100 metres west of Edge Lane

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 overflow channel on north side, stone staircases flanking lower entry, double gates at lower end and single gate at upper end. Thirteenth in a series of 13 similar locks, all in working order.

Listing NGR: SJ8903198027

Reasoning for the proposed works

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

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.

Gearing: The replacement of the hydraulic gearing with more appropriate manual gearing is a national approach by Canal & River Trust. Most hydraulic gearing was installed in the late 20th C and is not a historic gearing solution. Problems with leaking hydraulics on some canals has highlighted the need to remove this type of gearing when gates are being replaced.

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.

With regards to the gearing, the lock fabric will not be adversely affected as the hydraulic gearing mechanism sits on the metal beams. The paddles themselves will remain the same.

Proposed Design

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 and to re-introduce manual gearing which is historically appropriate and more environmentally friendly.



1961 Ashton lock example, prior to restoration and noting timber beams and manual gearing.



Existing steel balance beams with existing hydraulic gearing on the bottom gates.

PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH TO CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

The principle behind the replacement gates and installation of manual gearing is to improve the operation and safety of the Ashton Canal.

KEY ACCESS ISSUES

The works will improve access for canal users as it should increase the ease of operation and 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 removal of the metal balance beams to be replaced with oak balance beams and the hydraulic gearing replaced with manual gearing is a moderate alteration which will have a positive effect on the character of the designated lock. It is therefore respectfully requested that this application is approved.