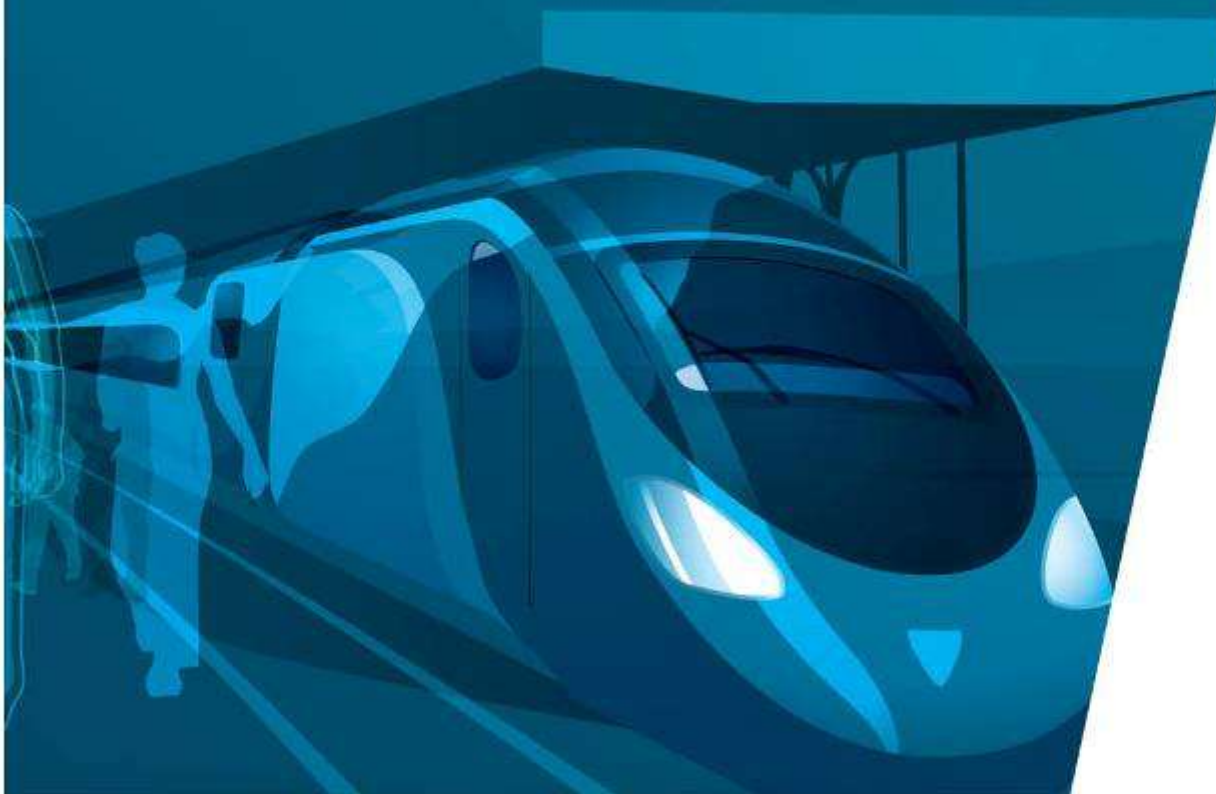


*Statement for the repair/refurbishment of the
Stephenson Bridge over Great Ducie Street/Victoria
Street, Manchester*

Document Reference:

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INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to outline the programme of works proposed to be undertaken to the railway bridge outside Manchester Victoria station located in the north of the city, referred to as Stephenson Bridge.

The proposals section below explains the works in further detail, setting out the rationale and justification for the scheme. This will also include analysis of the proposal heritage implications to satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy framework and relevant Local Planning Policy.

SITE LOCATION, CONTEXT AND HISTORY

The application site lies to the western side of Manchester Victoria station spanning Great Ducie Street/Victoria Street. Victoria Station is located to the north of the city centre, bounded to the west and southwest by Hunts Bank and Victoria Station approach. To the south east is Long Millgate and Corporation Street, with Cheetham Hill Road to the east.



Victoria is Manchester's second busiest mainline station, with 6.851 million passengers in 2012/13. Significant redevelopment works have recently been completed at the station, consisting of a £44 million transformation of the station into a transport interchange that is safer, brighter and more spacious.

Victoria station was the western terminus of the Manchester & Leeds Railway Company's trans-pennine line, constructed in 1844 and designed by George Stephenson. Several terminus stations were built in Manchester, already a thriving and growing city when the railways arrived, and efforts to link them led to a complex situation of stations and tracks as the network evolved.

A bridge across Victoria Street to carry this line was built at the same time and is the earliest of the three bridges entering the station.

In or around 1864, a second bridge was constructed immediately to the north of the 1844 bridge, connecting the line to Bolton and Wigan, developed by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway company. By the 1880's Victoria Station had grown to become one of the largest passenger stations in the country.

Manchester Exchange station, to the west of Victoria Station on the other side of the River Irwell, was opened in 1884 by the London and North Western Railway Company, to deal with some of the interconnection problems of the network. The 1844 bridge was widened at the same time to provide access between the two stations. This link formed what was the longest passenger platform in Europe, part of which was carried on the bridge and extended through the original 1844 section of Victoria station.

Further development took place in 1893, when a third bridge was constructed to the north of the 1864 bridge, carrying further tracks between Manchester Exchange and Victoria stations and between 1903 and 1908 Victoria station was further extended with a new façade by architect William Dawes. Exchange station, which was severely damaged by bombing during the Second World War was closed in 1969, and the 1893 bridge became redundant in 1992-4 when the new Arena was built onto the north side of Victoria Station, closing off the east side of the former track. The platform on the 1844 bridge also became redundant when Exchange station closed, and the train shed roof was demolished in 1982. The canopy survived until 1994, though there are still remnants of the platform on the bridge.

The north bridge, which is currently redundant is a wrought iron plate girder construction with cast iron parapets. The girders are haunched at the sides to allow for the passage of traffic below while providing sufficient support from the brick abutments to either side. The cast iron parapet is decorated with bands from the base, of continuous arches, key patterns, raised panels which are divided by Ionic pilasters and foliage swags.

The middle bridge was originally constructed in 1865 and later expanded in 1890s; it is of a single span plate girder construction with a cast iron parapet to the south elevation and cast iron cladding fixed to the north girder elevation.

The Iron girders rest on brick and masonry abutments to either side of the road, and support cast iron parapets decorated with bands of continuous arches, key patterns, raised panels divided by ionic pilasters and foliage swags.

The remaining bridge is referred to as Stephenson's bridge; the application only relates to the span over Great Ducie Street/Victoria Street. The bridge was constructed by George Stephenson in 1844, with later amendments in 1884.

The 1844 bridge has a single cast iron arch carrying the railway line over Victoria Street. The northern side has abutments to either side of the road span and on the eastern side of the river span, in plain rusticated ashlar, with a large deep niche with a keyed round arch on either side. The road span is a cast iron arch decorated on the side with cast iron strips forming lozenges and carrying a cast iron parapet with pilasters and raised panels.

The south side of the 1844 bridge is a plate girder construction, supported by a masonry wall alongside the station (to the east). To the west is a matching abutment to that on the north, and in the centre between the two spans is a matching double abutments with a short length of stone walling between carrying a stone parapet. The two abutment pillars are at different heights to accommodate the variations in ground level between the river and the road. The river span has a plain iron parapet with the girder construction visible below.

All three bridges were designated as Grade II listed in March 2008 and were designated due to their strong visual group and demonstrates the development of the transport network in Manchester. The decorative parapets reflect their important location at a railway nexus.

In addition, the 1844 bridge was designated as it formed part of the second phase of railway construction when railway building enthusiasm was at its height and much of the national network was laid down. It marks the heroic age of railway building and the period of 'railway mania' in which commercial speculation and the competition for routes led to the frantic construction of lines. The later expansion of the bridge formed part of the longest passenger platform in Europe until the adjoining Manchester Exchange station was closed in 1969.

This application relates to Stephenson bridge, but information regarding all bridges is given for historic context as they three bridges hold a group value as well as individual importance.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The key statutory test in the determination of an application for Listed Building Consent is set out in Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Act 1990), this states:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall 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.'

Relevant National and Local planning policy is set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was published in March 2012 and established the Government's vision for planning to help achieve sustainable development. Central to this is that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought through the planning system. The NPPF's approach to Heritage is fundamentally unchanged from that of PPS5, in that there is still a focus on the identification of 'heritage assets', outlining their 'significance' and considering any impact upon that significance as a consequence of any proposed works.

NPPF paragraph 128 establishes the information requirements for an application for consent affecting a heritage asset. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage 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.

Paragraph 129 details the policy principles that should guide LPAs in determining applications in relation to heritage assets. It states that in considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

When determining applications, LPAs should take account of (paragraph 131):

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraph 134 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Manchester Core Strategy

When developing the proposals, regarding was had to the policies within the Manchester Core Strategy, including the following:

Policy EN3 - Heritage

Throughout the City, the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the

distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre

Policy EC1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester (supporting text)

Ensuring access to job opportunities via sustainable transport such as walking and cycling, and public transport, such as bus routes, Metrolink and heavy rail is vital to improving the quality of life of residents through job opportunities, raising residents' wages and thereby increasing wealth

Policy T1 - Sustainable Transport

To deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system...the Council will support proposals that: - Contribute to improvements to the extent and reliability of the public transport network

Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

Developers will be expected to consider the City's heritage and continue the rich pattern of activity in the core area

SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSET

The requirement for applicants proposing to undertake works to heritage assets to describe the significance of the heritage asset affected is set out in the NPPF. Guidance to assist with assessing the asset's significance is provided in the Good Practice Advice Notes 1, 2, and 3. The Good Practice Advice Notes replaced PPS5 which has been deleted following the publication of the NPPF. Paragraph 6 of Good Practice Guide Note 2 states 'Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting early in the process is very important to an applicant in order to conceive of and design a successful development and to the local planning authority in order to make decisions in line with legal requirements and the objectives of the development plan'. When evaluating the existing significance of an asset, the Guide recommends assessing the nature of significance, extent of fabric and level of importance. These are all considered below.

The bridges display historic significance as a consequence of the role it played in the development of Manchester as a transportation hub.

Following the introduction of the railways to Manchester, the explosive rise in numbers of passengers and freight carried by the railways soon made the canals redundant and obsolete. Here the railway allowed goods to be transported at much greater efficiencies than ever before. This introduction of a new technology (railways) replacing old (canals) was symptomatic of the association the railways have with the increased mechanisation stemming from the industrial revolution and the rise of Manchester as an economic powerhouse throughout the nineteenth century.

The English Heritage document '*Designation Listing Selection Guide: Transport Buildings*' (2011) is of particular importance when assessing the historic value associated with railway infrastructure. This document sets out four 'ages' of railway construction which, in descending importance, is as below:

- The pioneering first phase, 1825–41;
- The heroic age, 1841–50;
- The third phase 1850s–1870s, the consolidation of the network; and
- The fourth period, up to 1914, the completion of the network.

The construction dates for the three bridges over Great Ducie Street range from 1844 – 1893. Stephenson bridge constructed in 1844, with later amendments in 1884; it is apparent that this structure stems from the 'heroic' age of railway construction, the period of 'railway mania' in which commercial speculation and the competition for routes led to the frantic construction of lines, including the Great North Railway and the laying of many of the main trunk lines that form the basis of today's Inter-City network.

The proposed repair works will secure the long-term future of the listed bridge for its original use. The bridge also presents a visual and aesthetic qualities, particularly when viewed with the adjacent two bridges. As highlighted in the List Descriptions, the bridges are notable for their decorative nature and group importance within the Manchester city centre urban landscape. The proposal will not detract from interpretation of the structure as forming part of a wider, historic entity.

NATURE OF SIGNIFICANCE

It is apparent that the railway bridge, individually and collectively possess significance due to its historical and aesthetic value and also with their relationship with other heritage assets in close proximity.

Stephenson bridge along with the adjacent bridges forms a strong visual group with the decorative parapets a reflection of their important location. The bridges possess aesthetic value in their own right, but also contribute to the broader visual qualities of the area and specific heritage assets located close by and within the adjacent Cathedral Conservation area. The bridges are a key component in a collective of distinct structures which collectively present a unique visual landscape that is dominated by transport infrastructure.

Considerable importance and weight is to be given to the desirability of preserving both listed buildings and their settings. The surrounding environment of the bridges contain a number of listed structures, both rail-related and non-rail related, including:

- Manchester Victoria Railway Station.
- Former Manchester Parcel Post Office- Grade II listed red brick building with moulded brick and terracotta detailing completed in 1894 was a specialist building strategically sited between the Exchange and Victoria Stations in Manchester and a key component of the extensive network of transportation and storage facilities in late 19th century Manchester.
- Chethams Hospital and attached wall – Grade I listed coursed red sandstone with dressings of gritstone and stone slate roof established in 1422, now part of the School of Music
- 3 Grade II listed structures within the Cathedral area, including the south east wing to Chethams Hospital (Former Manchester Grammar School) from 1873 – 1878 with red brick with sandstone dressings, now part of the School of Music. Detached block of School rom south of Chethams Hospital constructed in 1878 with coursed squared sandstone and slate roof and fragment of Hydes Cross also south of Chethams, the shaft of cross, dating back to 1653, was formerly at the Junction of Fennel Street with Withy Grove but relocated to this site in 1913.

Therefore, when viewed holistically, the application site and other heritage assets form an integral element of the townscape and historic environment.

PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT UPON HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

Whilst works were being completed on the bridge structure in 2019 it was noticed that there were fractures in 2 deck plates. These fractures seriously compromise the safety of the structure for trains passing above and for the traveling public below. The deck plates have had monitoring on them and increase assessments in the interim period until they can be replaced. The monitoring in place and has had a number of triggers already and shows signs of further deterioration. If the deck plates are not replaced then this would result in a closure of both the road below and the passage of trains above to ensure public safety or risk a catastrophic failure.

Network Rail propose to replace two sections of deck plate. The bridge span itself measure approximately 293sqm, whilst the proposed replacement is 10sqm. Network Rail aren't aware of any previous replacement having taken place to this section before – however, this doesn't mean that one hasn't taken place – there might have been previous repairs, which the documentation has unfortunately been lost or not recorded properly over the years, or might have taken place prior to the listing of the structures. The original deck plates are of a steel construction and have fractured, the extent of the fracturing doesn't allow for a safe repair that would provide a global factor of safety.



Each plate is attached with 6 Fixing bolts these are to be replaced with modern equivalents. We have procured the most similar deck material available and the same for the fixing bolts. Unfortunately the traditional materials and fixing methods are no longer available and would not meet the current Safety standards we need to adhere too. We have procured the product which is most like and in keeping with the structure.

Network Rail need to use fixings that meet with the current safety standards, trains and the frequency of them is significantly greater since when these bridges we first constructed. We must also take into account the rail safety and the ongoing maintenance of the future of the railway, which in turn safeguards the historic importance of the listed structure. This is an extremely busy section of railway and in order to maintain its original function and to keep the railway moving the proposed works need to take place.

Repairs were considered and explored but ruled out as they would not provide an acceptable factor of safety or comply with euro codes. The alternative would be to replace the entire deck which would be far more costly

and intrusive and result in a more significant impact to the heritage significance of the listed structure.

The proposed repair works would be a minor interventions that would not only retain the special design of the listed structure, but will serve to improve and retain the significance of the heritage asset, ensuring the preservation of the bridges special architectural and historic interest, in accordance with the provisions of the Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN3 and the NPPF.

It is felt that in this instance, the proposals will have a limited, yet acceptable, impact on the character and setting of the railway bridge. It is considered that the proposed works will ensure the longevity of the structure and this will far outweigh any damage to the historic environment.

As can be seen from the above, the physical impact to the bridge structure will be minimal to ensure that there is no loss of externally-visible historic fabric.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is considered that the works proposed are respectful to the special character and appearance of Stephenson bridge, and other heritage assets within its environs including, the Salford Railway Viaduct, Manchester Victoria station and the Cathedral Conservation Area. The proposal will not result in any unacceptable impact upon the significance of the bridges.

In light of the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with the policy thrust stipulated by the NPPF and the Manchester Core Strategy. Consequently, it is considered that Listed Building Consent should be granted for the proposals

Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG

www.networkrail.co.uk