Canal & River Trust
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LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

Lock 1
Ashton Canal
Manchester

Shortening of steel balance beam for user safety improvement



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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 in relation to the proposed shortening of the steel balance beam to the offside head gate as a user safety improvement at Lock 1, on the Ashton Canal.

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 1 is a Grade ll Listed structure.

LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The lock is located on the Ashton Canal in Manchester, adjacent to Great Ancoats Street.

Easting 385295
Northing 398174

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Listed Building application concerns the following –

- **shortening of the steel balance beam to the offside tail gate as a user safety improvement**

APPLICANT

Canal & River Trust

STATEMENT PREPARED BY

Prepared by:

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Background history of the Ashton Canal

The Grade 2 listed lock is situated on the Ashton Canal, adjacent to Great Ancoats Street, Manchester.

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**.

Statutory List Description

The lock is a Grade 2 listed asset.

The list description reads –

ASHTON CANAL LOCK NUMBER 1 IMMEDIATELY EAST OF GREAT ANCOATS STREET

SJ8598 ASHTON CANAL, Beswick And Clayton 698-1/17/507 Lock No.1, immediately east of Great Ancoats Street

GV II

Canal lock. c.1792-1799; altered. Large blocks of millstone grit, wooden gates. Narrow type (chamber 7 feet wide), with overflow channel on south side, central island with curved taper at both ends; stone staircases flanking lower entry at west end. First in a series of 13 similar locks, all in working order.

Listing NGR: SJ8529398173

The date of listing is June 6th 1994 and notes the lock with timber gates, though no mention of steel balance beams. The Architectural Heritage Survey, carried out for British Waterways in 1993 by Dr Nigel Crowe notes the timber gates but with steel beams -

Originally reputed to be double lock: Tail gates with hydra[illegible] paddle mounted gearing. ~~Tail~~ Head gates with hydraulic ground mounted paddle gearing. Steel balance beams. Wooden gates with buffer plates. Lock chamber of brick with 2 tier (courses) stones to edging. Stop plank grooves. Footbridge across tail - wooden deck - steel rails.



Architectural Heritage Survey. 19.2.1993 Dr Nigel Crowe

Steel beams were added to many gates on the Ashton Canal, reputedly because of the high level of vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the time but due to recent building of canal side residential housing and apartments, such incidents have dropped.

The timber gates, whilst replaced on a 25 year or so cycle, are constructed traditionally of oak, the steel beams are a late 20thc alteration and not historic.

Reasoning for the proposed works

The areas around the lock includes residential property, industrial/factory units, and open space to the south where the new MetroLink runs parallel to the Canal.

The area is still known for anti-social behaviour, but the towpath is regularly used by pedestrians and cyclists. At the offside, there is gate access to the open space which abounds the MetroLink line. This open space is not in Canal & River Trust ownership.

The Visitor Risk Assessment carried out in October 2016 noted a Medium Risk at the lock, with between 1000-3000 visits per year. The Assessment noted -

'There is an open byweir that runs parallel to the lock which is unfenced. The height of the drop into the open race is not significant. The o/s quadrant has a stone slab extension added to widen the access around the o/s balance beam'.

The photographs below show a slab bridge over the channel from the adjoin land, giving access to a gate and the open land beyond.





Proposed design

Based on the increase use of the cruising Cheshire Ring, the element of behaviour around the lock and the requirement for an access into to open space to the offside. The Trust has been looking at the safety around the offside balance beam at the head of the lock.

The desire was not to add any further fencing at this site, and to support a design which would cause least harm to the overall heritage significance of the designated lock. All the balance beams are constructed of box steel and have the handles welded on.

After preliminary discussions with Conservation Officers at MCC, it was noted that the minimal reduction in length of the balance beam being proposed would be the preferred option on the following basis:

(1). Although this would result in the loss of listed fabric it is felt this would give rise to less harm than the visual clutter of railings and would avoid harm to original/historic canal-edge coping stones for their fixing.



(2). Though the two balance beams for this pair of lock gates are currently of the same length. The limited extent of loss of from the end of one beam is not expected to unduly disrupt the visual symmetry of the gates and the unaffected balance beam would remain at the current length for future reference.

(3). It would be possible to neatly add the extra weight to the altered balance beam without undue visual impact.

The proposed design is minimal intervention to ensure the safety of our users. This would shorten the offside steel balance beam by 250mm, and allow 750mm edge distance between the head gate and the bywash.



The cut off section of steel to be reused and pieced on the inside of the steel beam at the end, using 4mm fillet weld to compensate for the loss of mass.

This will restore the gate's balance, and so should still be comfortable to operate.

The pull handle would need to be relocated near the end of the shortened balance beam.

The beams will be repainted with white paint at the end of the beam to be 650mm wide.



Photo 1

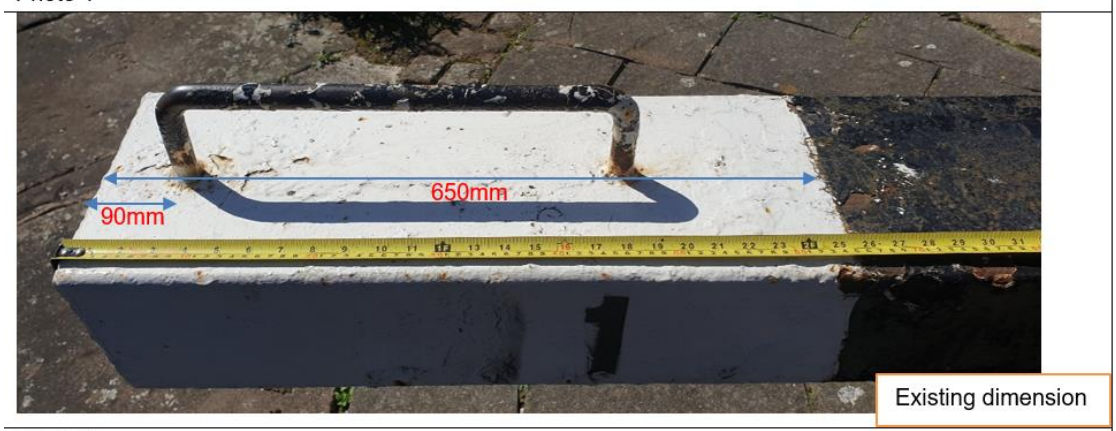

Photo 2

PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH TO CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

The principle behind the scheme is to remove the risk to users of the lock and towpath, and therefore improve public safety.

KEY ACCESS ISSUES

The incorporation of the fenders will improve access for canal users as it should increase the reliability and safety of the lock and this section of the canal.

VEHICULAR AND TRANSPORT LINKS

The works will allow safer access for customers along this section of the Ashton 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

It is considered that the alterations proposed to the offside head lock gate has a neutral effect upon the character of the lock, meeting identified concerns and improving safety in a low key and unobtrusive form.

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed alterations are minor in character. It is therefore respectfully requested that they be approved.