MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Delegated Officer Report

Summary of application details

Application reference:	PLA-2026-001167
Application type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Proposal:	Listed Building Consent for bridge repair including cleaning and re-painting wrought-iron beams, western span strengthening works with new steel beam and masonry pillars, installation of steel security fence and gate to western span bay, south-west parapet re-build to original height, masonry repair/necessary replacement and re-pointing.
Site address:	Ashton Canal Towpath Bridge over junction with Stockport Branch Canal Manchester M11 4RY
Ward(s):	Clayton & Openshaw
Date application valid:	28 July 2026
Applicant name:	Mr Adrian Dowd
Case officer:	Holly Wright
Recommendation:	Approve
Date of recommendation:	13 October 2026

Description of site, building and/or area

The application relates to the Grade II listed Ashton Canal Towpath Bridge over the junction with the Stockport Branch Canal (List Entry No. 1197794). The bridge forms part of the wider historic canal infrastructure associated with the Ashton Canal and is experienced within the grouped setting of the Grade II listed Ashton Canal Lock No. 11, located to the east at Stockport Junction Basin. The bridge is a heritage asset of special architectural and historic interest, deriving significance from its nineteenth-century canal engineering, surviving historic fabric, and contribution to the historic canal landscape.

The proposal seeks consent for repair, conservation, structural strengthening and security works intended to secure the continued long-term use and preservation of the bridge. The submitted Design and Access Statement confirms that the proposed scheme has been informed by the principle of minimum intervention, with works designed to address structural defects, public safety concerns and ongoing deterioration whilst retaining historic fabric wherever practicable. The statement concludes that the repair works are required "to ensure its proper preservation" and to avoid the need for more intrusive interventions in the future. The bridge exhibits significant deterioration, including widespread surface corrosion to the wrought-iron beams, complete failure of the paint system, severe section loss to the southern edge beam of the western span, collapse of the south-west parapet, and deterioration of associated steel railings. The necessity for repair and stabilisation is therefore clearly evidenced.









Description of development

The applicant is seeking Listed Building Consent for bridge repair including cleaning and re-painting wrought-iron beams, western span strengthening works with new steel beam and masonry pillars, installation of steel security fence and gate to western span bay, south-west parapet re-build to original height, masonry repair/necessary replacement and re-pointing.

Consultation, notification and publicity responses

Local residents – no responses received.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) made the following comments in response to the application:

- Summary: A bat assessment is recommended prior to determination. The only other ecological issue is protection of the Ashton Canal SBI during the repair works.
- Bats: The bridge appears to have potential for crevice roosting bats such as common pipistrelle and is located in a high risk location as the canal will provide foraging and commuting potential for bats. I therefore recommend that prior to determination a bat roost assessment is carried out and supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA.
- Other Wildlife Issues: It is unlikely that there are any other wildlife issues associated with this structure, though birds could theoretically nest under the bridge if any nesting platforms were present or species such as moorhen or mallard nest in vegetation associated with the canal. I am satisfied however that nesting birds risk is low and can be dealt with via an informative.
- Ashton Canal SBI: The bridge is located over a part of the SBI. There will be a risk during repairs and strengthening of pollution of the canal, through dust, debris and substance such as cement and mortar dropping in to the water. I therefore recommend that as part of any construction and environmental management plan, details of how avoidance of accidental harm to the water quality of the canal is provided.
- Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): Section N2.1 part d) of the NPPF 2026 states that development proposal: should: Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value. 10% BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
- As this is a listed building application the above does not apply. I am satisfied that no further information or measures is required.

Following submission and review of the requested Bat Roost Assessment, GMEU made the following comments:

- Bats: A bat assessment has been provided. I am satisfied that the survey has followed best practice guidelines and is currently valid. The bridge was assessed as having low bat roosting potential owing to several potential bat roosting features being present. All were capable of being checked with an endoscope and no evidence of bats found. The consultant has therefore concluded that the risk is low enough that no dusk surveys are required. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report.
- Nesting Birds: The bridge was also checked for evidence of nesting birds. None was found. I again have no reason to doubt the findings of the report.
- My previous recommendations re. protection of the Canal still apply.

Relevant policies

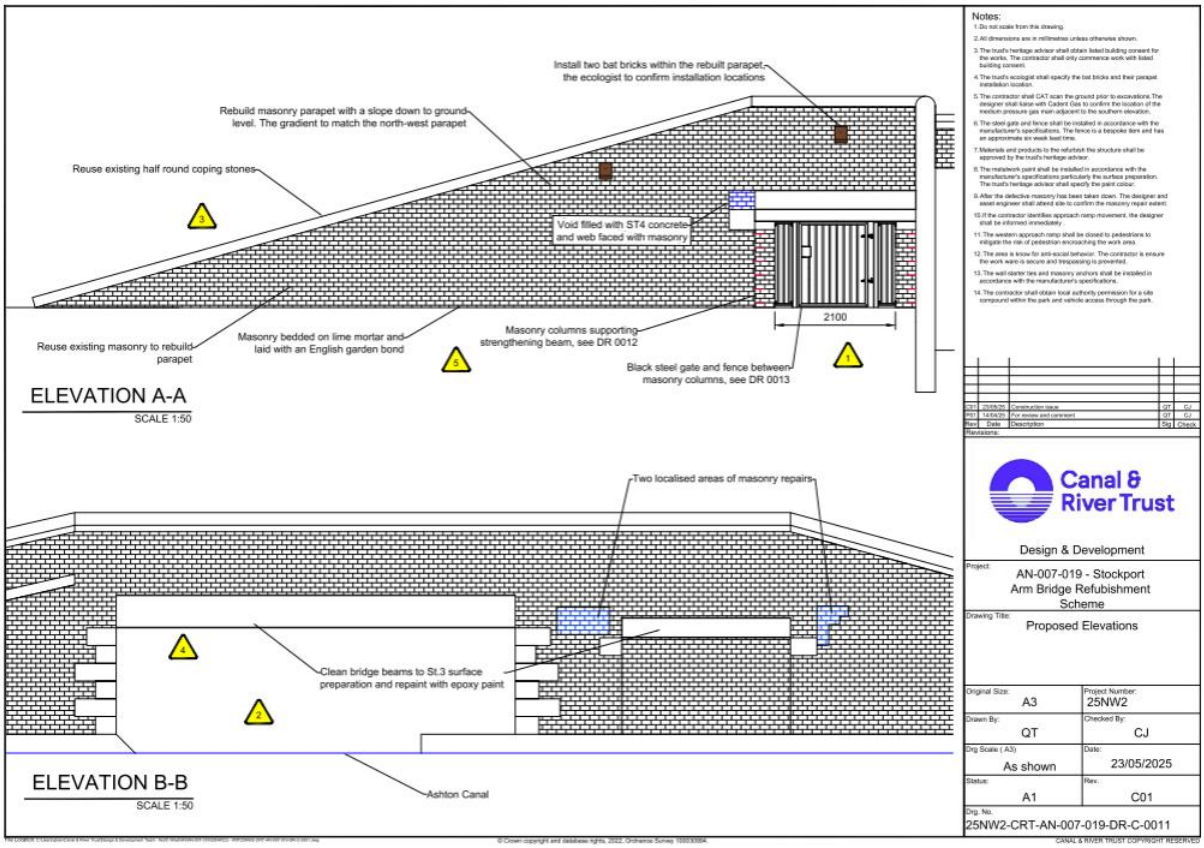
The following policies are considered relevant in the consideration of this application.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – The UDP has been superseded by the Core Strategy Development Plan, but certain policies are still considered of relevance:
- Policy DC19 – Listed Buildings

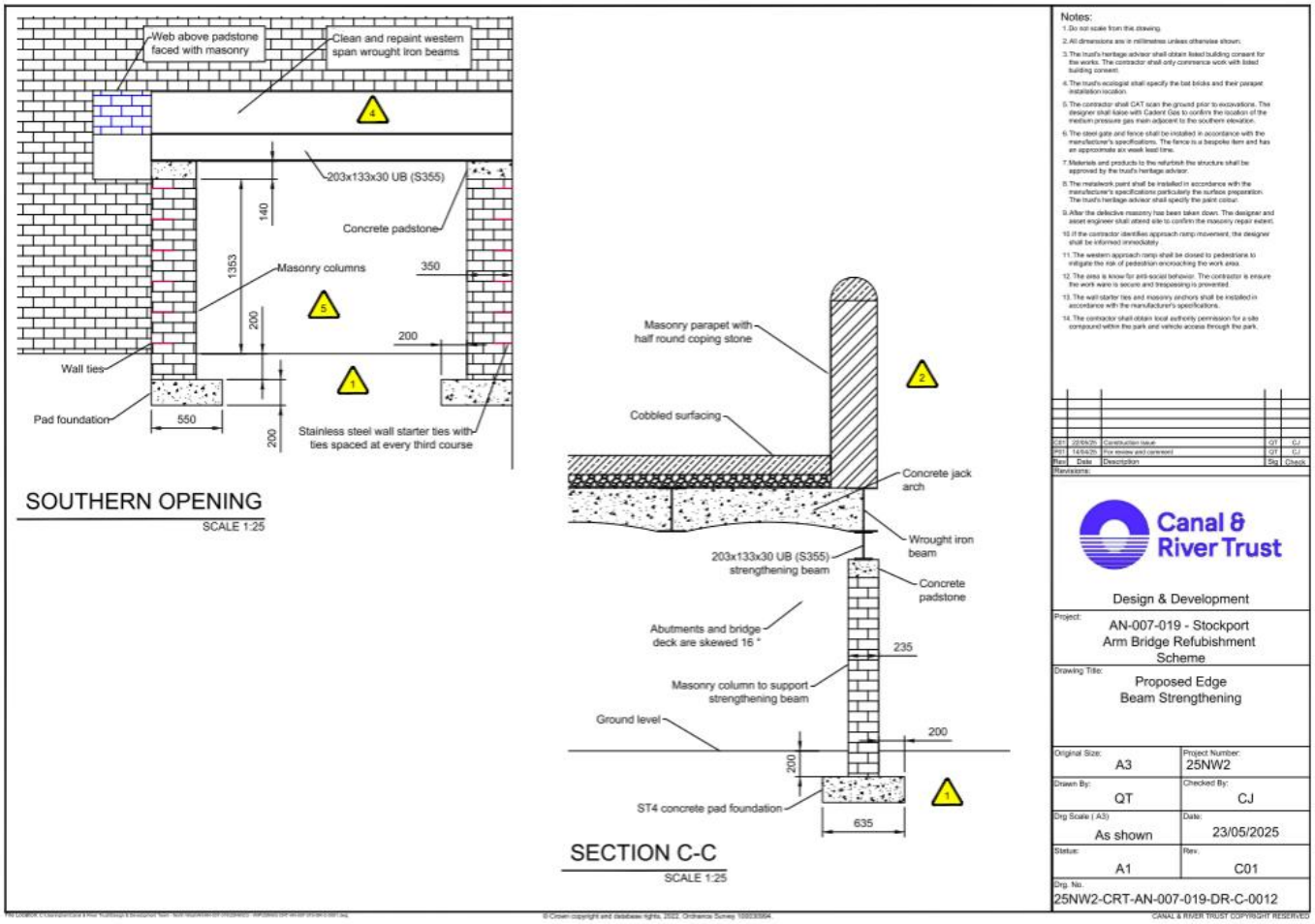
The Manchester Core Strategy – Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:
- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy DM1 – Development Management
- Policy EN3 – Heritage
- Policy EN15 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Policy EN17 – Water Quality

Places for Everyone - is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. It has been published by the GMCA on behalf of the nine districts and took effect and became part of the statutory development plan on March 21, 2024.
- Policy JP-P1 – Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

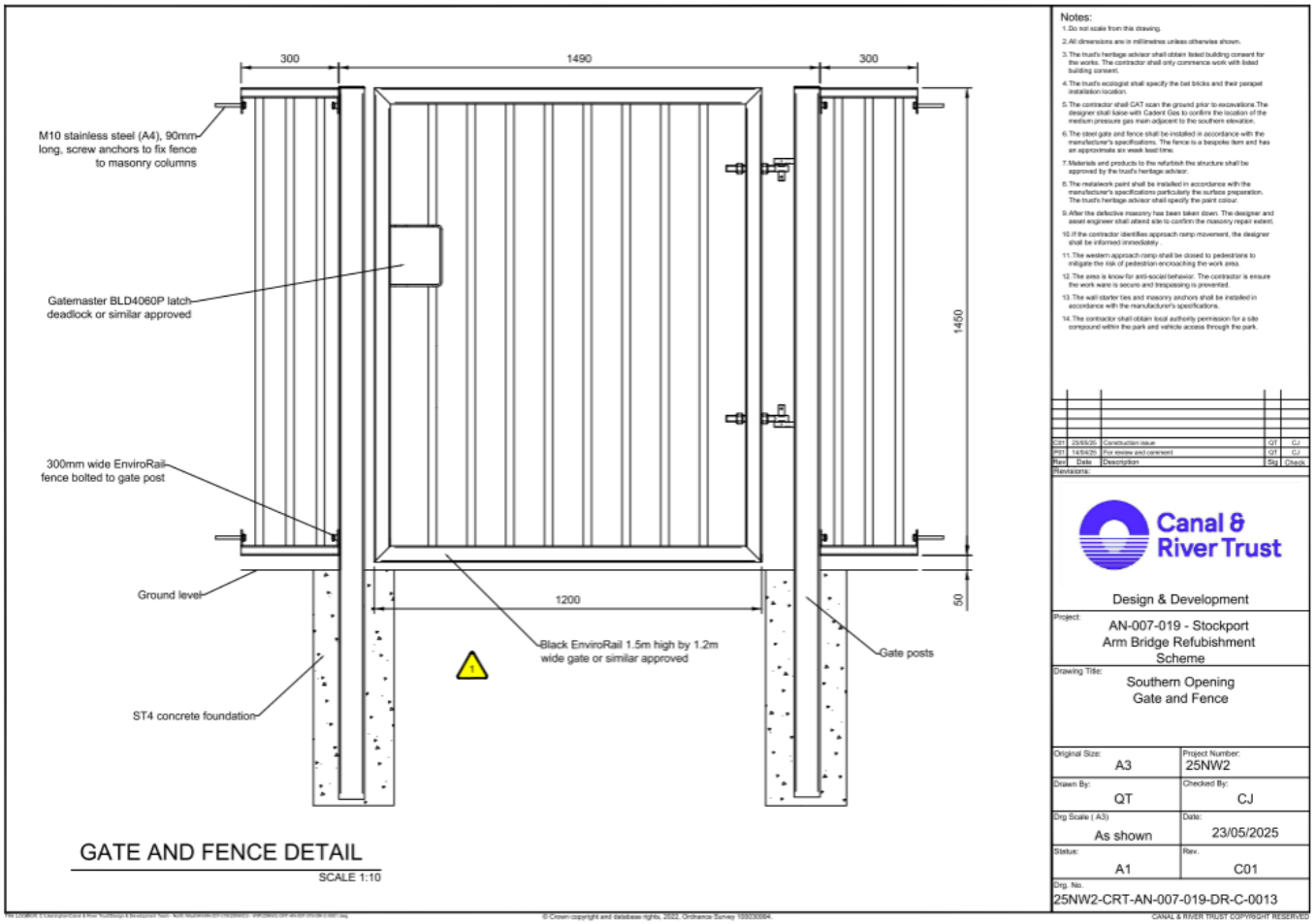
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2026)
- Chapter 14 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Policy DP3: Key principles for well-designed places
- Chapter 20 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- Policy HE4: Securing the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets
- Policy HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets
- Policy HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets



Submitted proposed elevations



Submitted proposed edge beam strengthening



Submitted southern opening gate and fence

Assessment

Principle – the principle of the proposed works, comprising bridge repairs including the cleaning and repainting of wrought-iron beams, strengthening of the western span through the installation of a new steel beam and masonry piers, installation of a steel security fence and gate to the western span bay, reconstruction of the south-west parapet to its original height, and associated masonry repairs, replacement where necessary, and repointing, is considered acceptable.

The proposed repairs are necessary to safeguard public safety and to secure the long-term preservation of the Grade II listed structure. The works will help prevent further deterioration of the historic fabric and reduce the likelihood of more extensive and intrusive interventions being required in the future.

The main consideration in the determination of this Listed Building Consent application is the impact of the proposed works upon the special architectural and historic interest, character, appearance and significance of the Grade II listed structure, having special regard to Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the relevant heritage policies of the Development Plan, including saved policy DC18 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policy EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, and policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Impact upon listed structure – the proposed works have been carefully developed to address structural defects, public safety concerns and ongoing deterioration, whilst seeking to retain and conserve as much of the historic fabric of the Grade II listed bridge as possible. Overall, the scheme adopts a repair-led approach that prioritises retention of significance and limits intervention into the historic structure.

In respect of the structural strengthening works, the proposed installation of a new steel beam beneath the existing corroded wrought-iron member is considered justified on heritage grounds. The submitted Design and Access Statement demonstrates that complete replacement of the existing beam would necessitate the removal of substantial areas of historic bridge fabric, including sections of the parapet and deck structure. By contrast, the proposed solution allows the historic wrought-iron beam to remain in situ, preserving the fabric and evidential value of the structure whilst addressing the identified structural deficiencies. Although the introduction of a secondary beam may result in a somewhat disjointed visual appearance beneath the bridge, this is considered to represent a proportionate and conservation-led intervention that minimises harm to the significance of the listed building.

The proposed supporting masonry columns are similarly considered acceptable. The submitted details specify construction using materials and techniques sympathetic to the existing structure, including the use of NHL 3.5 lime mortar and masonry designed to reflect the bridge's skewed alignment. The columns will be tied into the existing abutments using stainless steel wall ties and, subject to the use of appropriate brickwork and mortar, are considered to preserve the character and appearance of the listed structure whilst facilitating the necessary strengthening works.

The installation of a black-painted steel security gate and fence beneath the western span is also considered acceptable. The submitted information identifies ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour associated with unrestricted access to the bridge void. The proposed intervention is modest and recessive in appearance and has been designed to avoid direct fixing into significant historic fabric, instead being attached to the proposed new masonry columns. The works are therefore considered to have a negligible impact upon the significance of the listed building whilst assisting in its long-term protection and management.

Consideration has also been given to the treatment of the buried masonry wall identified during trial excavation works. The submitted methodology requires the feature to be exposed, recorded and assessed by the Canal & River Trust Heritage Advisor prior to determining the extent of any removal required to facilitate construction. This approach is welcomed as it ensures that the significance of the remains is properly understood and documented before intervention takes place. Whilst the partial loss of buried historic fabric would result in a degree of harm, such harm is limited and is justified by the wider conservation and structural benefits of the scheme. Appropriate archaeological recording, investigation and archiving should be undertaken and has been conditioned accordingly.

The reconstruction of the collapsed south-west parapet is considered to result in a heritage benefit. The submitted information indicates that the collapsed section largely comprises later twentieth-century alterations associated with a former factory wall and that the proposed works seek to re-establish the parapet to its original historic form, reflecting the surviving parapets on the Stockport approach. The recovery and reinstatement of original coping stones and masonry, together with the use of matching replacement materials only where necessary, represents a sensitive approach to restoration. The proposed use of traditional materials, including NHL 3.5 lime mortar, and the reinstatement of the existing English Garden Wall bond will enhance the architectural coherence and historic character of the bridge

The proposed cleaning, repair and repainting of the historic wrought-iron beams is also supported as a necessary conservation measure. The works will arrest ongoing corrosion and contribute to the long-term preservation of the bridge's historic ironwork. The proposed methodology, including St.3 surface preparation and the application of a corrosion-resistant protective coating, is considered appropriate. The use of chemical stripping to remove lead-based paint is particularly welcomed as it minimises the risk of damage to the historic fabric and reduces environmental contamination. The final paint colour to be used has been secured by condition and is to be informed, where possible, by surviving evidence of historic finishes.

Finally, the removal of the deteriorated modern railings associated with the collapsed parapet is considered a positive intervention. These features do not contribute to the significance of the listed structure, and their removal will improve the visual appearance of the structure whilst addressing an existing public safety concern.

Taking all matters into account, the proposed works are considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest and significance of the Grade II listed bridge. The scheme principally comprises conservation, repair and stabilisation measures that will secure the long-term preservation of the asset. In particular, the reconstruction of the collapsed parapet using salvaged materials, the repair and repointing of historic masonry, the treatment and repainting of the wrought-iron beams, and the removal of unsafe modern features will result in positive effects and clear heritage benefits.

Whilst the introduction of the strengthening beam, supporting masonry columns and security gate will introduce new elements and result in a degree of visual change, these works are considered necessary, proportionate and appropriately designed interventions that will stabilise the structure, improve public safety and safeguard the continued use and preservation of the bridge. As such, any harm arising from these elements is considered to be less than substantial and is outweighed by the substantial public and heritage benefits delivered through the repair, conservation and long-term protection of the asset. For these reasons, the proposal is considered to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed structure and accords with the statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as the relevant heritage policies of the Development Plan, including saved policy DC18 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policy EN3 of the Manchester Core

Strategy, and policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Ecology – the application was reviewed by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), who initially advised that the bridge had potential to support crevice-roosting bats, including common pipistrelle, due to its structure and its location adjacent to the canal corridor, which provides suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat. For these reasons, GMEU requested that a Bat Roost Assessment be undertaken prior to determination.

Following the submission of the Bat Roost Assessment, GMEU confirmed that the survey had been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance and remained valid. The assessment identified several potential bat roost features, all of which were inspected using an endoscope, with no evidence of bats recorded. The bridge was therefore assessed as having low bat roosting potential and GMEU agreed with the consultant's conclusion that no further survey work was required. The survey also found no evidence of nesting birds, and GMEU accepted these findings. Accordingly, the submitted Bat Roost Assessment is considered acceptable and sufficient to inform the determination of the application.

In relation to wider ecological impacts, GMEU advised that the principal remaining ecological consideration relates to the protection of the Ashton Canal Site of Biological Importance (SBI), over which the bridge is located. There is potential for pollution of the canal during repair and strengthening works through the accidental deposition of dust, debris, cement, mortar or other substances. To address this, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been secured by condition, requiring details of measures to prevent adverse impacts on the canal and its water quality. In addition, ecological informatives relating to nesting birds have been attached to the decision notice.

Subject to compliance with the approved CEMP and the attached informatives, the proposal is considered acceptable in ecological terms and accords with policies EN15 and EN17 of the Manchester Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Conclusion – the proposed works are necessary to secure the long-term preservation, structural stability and safe operation of the Grade II listed bridge. The scheme has been developed in accordance with conservation principles, prioritising the repair and retention of historic fabric wherever possible and limiting intervention to that which is necessary to address identified defects and ensure the asset's continued use. Whilst the strengthening beam, supporting masonry columns and security gate will introduce a degree of change, these elements are justified by structural and management requirements and have been designed to minimise impacts on the significance of the heritage asset.

Overall, the proposal will deliver significant heritage benefits through the repair, conservation and restoration of the bridge, including the reinstatement of the collapsed parapet, repair of historic masonry and ironwork, and the removal of unsympathetic and unsafe features. Any resulting harm is less than substantial and is decisively outweighed by the public benefits arising from the safeguarding of the asset's significance and longevity. Subject to conditions, including measures to protect the adjacent Ashton Canal SBI during construction, the proposal is considered acceptable in heritage and ecological terms and accords with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including saved policy DC18 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policies DM1, SP1, EN3, EN15 and EN17 of the Manchester Core Strategy, and policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Other Legislative Requirements

Equality Act 2010
Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations
This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved polices of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Approve

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. Issues have arisen during the consideration of this application and the officer negotiated with the agent to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to Refuse

1) 3-year time limit:

The works authorised by this consent shall begin no later than the expiration three years from the date of this consent.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2) Specified plans:

The works hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

- ‘Proposed Elevations’, numbered ‘25NW2-CRT-AN-007-019-DR-C-0011 REV C01’, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026.
- ‘Proposed Edge Beam Strengthening’, numbered ‘25NW2-CRT-AN-007-019-DR-C-0012 REV C01’, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026.
- ‘Southern Opening Gate and Fence’, numbered ‘25NW2-CRT-AN-007-019-DR-C-0013 REV C01’, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026.
- ‘Design and Access Statement’, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026.
- ‘Heritage Statement’, received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026.

Reason - To ensure that the works are carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

3) Materials:

Prior to the commencement of the relevant works, samples and specifications of the following shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority:

a) Replacement brickwork together with a drawing showing the extent of any replacement brickwork, where the reuse of existing brick is not possible;
b) Replacement stonework together with a drawing showing the extent of any replacement stonework, where the reuse of existing stone is not possible;
c) Replacement coping materials together with a drawing showing the extent of any replacement coping materials, where the reuse of existing coping materials is not possible;
d) An on-site sample panel demonstrating the proposed mortar mix, colour, joint profile and finish, against the existing mortar.

The works shall then be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure there is no resulting harm to the Listed Building, pursuant to saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan, policies DM1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

4) Paint colour:

Prior to the application of any paint or coating to the metalwork, details of the proposed paint colour and finish, together with a justification for its selection based upon any existing evidence of historic finishes, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The works shall then be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure there is no resulting harm to the Listed Building, pursuant to saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan, policies DM1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

5) Buried masonry wall:

a) No dismantling or removal of the buried masonry wall, as referenced on page 7 of the approved Design and Access Statement, shall take place until a scheme for its recording,

investigation and archiving has been submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The works shall then be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

b) Within three months of the completion of the dismantling or removal of the wall, the completed record and archive report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To ensure an appropriate record is made of the Listed Building, pursuant to saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan, policies DM1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

6) Masonry columns:

The proposed masonry columns shown on the approved drawings titled 'Proposed Elevations', numbered '25NW2-CRT-AN-007-019-DR-C-0011 REV C01' and 'Proposed Edge Beam Strengthening', numbered '25NW2-CRT-AN-007-019-DR-C-0012 REV C01', received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 28 July 2026, shall be constructed to match the existing brickwork, mortar, detailing and appearance of the Listed Building.

Reason - To preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building, pursuant to saved policy DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan, policies DM1 and EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

7) Construction Environmental Management Plan:

Prior to the commencement of the works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The CEMP shall include measures to prevent dust, debris, cement, mortar and any other pollutants entering the canal during the repair and strengthening works.

The works shall then be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To protect the water quality and ecological interest of the canal and associated Site of Biological Importance, pursuant to policies SP1, DM1, EN15, and EN17 of the Manchester Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Informatives:

1) The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built. Listed Building consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. If a birds nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).

2) Whilst the bridge to be restored has been assessed as low risk for bats, the applicant is reminded that under the 2019 Regulations it is an offence to disturb, harm or kill bats. If a bat is found all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s).