

**9. FULL APPLICATION – MINOR REVISION DESIGN OF BRIDGE MODIFICATION WORKS PREVIOUSLY CONSENTED THROUGH THE NETWORK RAIL (HOPE VALLEY CAPACITY) ORDER AT SPITTLEHOUSE BRIDGE (BRIDGE MAS/25) NORTH OF A6187 HATHERSAGE ROAD HATHERSAGE. (NP/DDD/0123/0100 JK)**

**APPLICANT: NETWORK RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE LTD**

**Summary**

1. This project has commenced under a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) and Deemed planning consent which included this bridge extension to carry the additional section of railway line.
2. The need has arisen for an amended bridge design as a result of another service owner's operational requirement to maintain access to an existing oil pipeline running under the bridge.
3. The amended bridge design maintains clearance heights for local vehicle access but will have a more modern utilitarian appearance as a result of the greater use of exposed concrete and steel compared to the consented design.
4. Subject to conditions to secure further mitigation of the visual impacts discussed below, on balance, the proposed design is considered to be acceptable given that it is located on a private access track away from general public view.
5. In this setting it would have only a minor local adverse impact upon the existing stone bridge and immediate setting which we conclude is outweighed by the wider and significant public benefits.
6. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

**Site and Surroundings**

7. The application site is the north side of an existing railway bridge carrying the Hope Valley Railway Line over a private access track which leads from the A6187 Hathersage to Sickleholme/Bamford road up to a property known as Cunliffe House. The bridge is about mid-way between the village of Hathersage and the hamlet of Sickleholme and is set back about 85m from the A6187, with Cunliffe House located around 180m further to the north.
8. There is a further dwelling, Lilybrooke, which takes access off the same private road and lies immediately on the east side of the access track between the railway line and the A6187.
9. An oil pipeline runs south-north underneath the line in the vicinity of the bridge and private road. The surrounding land comprises small grazing fields surrounded by hedged boundaries and mature trees.

**Proposal**

10. Full planning application for a new structure to be built alongside the existing bridge to carry the new passing loop line.
11. The structure would comprise a standard grey painted steel U-type deck sitting on reinforced concrete pile caps with piled foundations, located directly adjacent to the

north of the existing railway bridge structure. The proposed deck will have a total length of 12-metres and vertical clearance down to the lane of at least 3.8-metres. The concrete pile caps will be combined with the function of cill beams and ballast retention walls.

12. The existing upside stone wingwalls will be cut down to provide a minimum clearance of 0.8-metres to the new deck soffit for maintenance. New contiguous bored piles wingwalls will be cast in concrete, splaying away from the access road to provide restraint to the proposed embankment. The proposed wingwalls will be finished with gritstone cladding to match the existing wing walls on the south side of the bridge, however the concrete capping beam is not clad in stone.

### **Background**

13. In 2018 Statutory Instrument No. 446 - The Network Rail (Hope Valley Capacity) Order 2018 was made along with a planning direction giving the project works deemed planning consent. These authorised Network Rail Infrastructure Limited to construct and operate works on the Hope Valley railway Line between Sheffield and Manchester for the purposes of improving capacity.
14. In effect these works provide for the construction of a 1km long approx. passing layby for slower trains to pull into and allow faster ones to pass, thereby increasing capacity on the line to 3 express trains an hour. The work includes new sections of embankment and cutting and associated works to the east of Bamford Station and west of Hathersage village to accommodate the new track layby section. Similar works were granted outside the Park at Dore and Totley Station for the opposite line direction.
15. The Deemed Planning Consent also authorised the widening of this bridge with a reinforced concrete box structure located directly next to the existing north side of the bridge.
16. Following consent in 2018, the presence of the oil pipe beneath the bridge structure has caused the consented box structure to be dismissed as an option, as the service pipe would have been covered with concrete and therefore made inaccessible. As the service owner requires access for routine maintenance an alternative design has needed to be found resulting in this current application.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions**

- 1. Commence development within 3 years**
- 2. Carry out in accordance with specified approved plans which incorporate amended fence and wingwall capping treatments.**
- 3. Colouring of metal decking to be dark green to BS 12B29 or equivalent RAL**
- 4. Carry out in accordance with existing approved construction method statements and ecological reports.**

### **Key Issues**

17. A scheme for the widening of this bridge has already been approved so the principle of the development is acceptable.

18. The key issue is therefore whether the revised design which is required for engineering reasons would still be appropriate and conserve the character, appearance and amenity of the local area, as well as that of neighbouring properties

### **History**

19. 2018 – Transport and Works Act Order confirmed and deemed consent granted for rail passing loop and footbridge

### **Consultations**

20. Highway Authority – In principle no objection to this proposal, however Construction Method Statement or Construction Management Plan needs to be submitted or condition for any future planning consent.
21. District Council – No response
22. Hathersage Parish Council – Object and make the following comments;

- (i) Proposed bridge modifications are significant and not a 'minor revision'.

*Officer Note – This is correct in planning terms and is why a full application for planning permission needed to be made.*

- (ii) Widening of the bridge would considerably reduce the clearance height and width, due to the angle and gradient of the road – the land affected is a registered agricultural holding and the proposed changes will unacceptably impede commercial and agricultural vehicular access clearance to the land and property.

*Officer Note – The applicant has demonstrated this is not the case and access clearance height will remain as existing.*

- (iii) Design and scale of the proposed bridge modifications mean it would look more like a motorway bridge and be totally out of character and not in keeping with the area's natural surroundings and beauty.

- (iv) Finish of the bridge wings should be in natural stone

### **Representations**

23. Two letters of objection have been received raising the following summarised points;

- No dimensions of wing walls are shown.
- Does it remain in the TWAO area?
- The vertical clearance has been reduced and the extra width of the bridge brings it further up the inclined drive. The low height of the bridge is currently a problem with some vehicles. If the vertical clearance is not maintained at 4.1 metres vehicles coming up the drive will catch as they ascend the drive. This is a great concern, especially as the bridge clearance on the drawing shows 3.76m - We are a farm with high vehicles.
- The bridge would be visible from the house and two holiday lets - The design impacts the view coming down the drive.
- Question the need for black and yellow height boards on the north face and handrails when there never have been any and their addition makes it look like a motorway bridge.

- There is currently a culvert running parallel with the bridge and a drainage ditch maintained by Network Rail. There is no mention of a replacement on this application which is needed.

### **Main Policies**

24. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, DS1, L1, T3, CC1

25. Relevant Local Plan policies: DM1, DMC3, DMC11, DMC13, DMT3.

### 26. National Planning Policy Framework

27. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised most recently in 2021. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the East Midlands Regional Plan 2009, the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.'

28. Para 176. Of the NPPF states that 'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads...'

### 29. Core Strategy Policies

30. Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.

31. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.

32. Policy DS1 sets out the development strategy with what types of development are acceptable within various areas of the National Park.

33. Policy L1 identifies that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics...

34. Policy CC1 states that in order to build in resilience to and mitigate the causes of climate change all development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources.
35. T3: Design of transport infrastructure
36. A. Transport infrastructure, including roads, bridges, lighting, signing, other street furniture and public transport infrastructure, will be carefully designed and maintained to take full account of the valued characteristics of the National Park.
37. B. Particular attention will be given to using the minimum infrastructure necessary and also to make transport interchanges welcoming and safe.
38. C. Mitigation measures will be provided where transport infrastructure severs wildlife routes.
39. Development Management Policies.
40. DM1 The presumption of sustainable development in the context of National Park purposes states that; When considering development proposals, the National Park Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that are consistent with National Park purposes:
41. Policy DMC3 states that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place. Particular attention will be paid to siting, scale, form, mass, levels, height and orientation in relation to existing buildings, settlement form and character, including impact on open spaces, landscape features and the wider landscape setting which contribute to the valued character and appearance of the area.
42. DMT3 - Access and design criteria seeks a high standard of design for transport related infrastructure.
- 43. Assessment**
44. Principle of the Development
45. The principle of widening the bridge to carry the new passing line has already been established via the TWAO. This application seeks approval for an amended design and is necessary to enable maintenance access to an existing oil pipeline to be retained which would otherwise have been covered by the original consented design.
46. The key issue in this application is therefore the impact of the revised design upon the character and appearance of the bridge and its local landscape setting together with any impacts upon access or amenity for the neighbouring properties.
47. Design and Landscape Impact
48. The current approved scheme

49. The TWAO consented design for the bridge widening was to consist of a cast in-situ reinforced concrete box structure located directly adjacent to the North side of the existing bridge. The deck would carry the new passing line and would have had a clear span of 3700mm and vertical clearance of 4100mm. The walls and base slab would have been 300-400mm thick and cast using permanent formwork planks to ensure road access was maximised. The existing stone wingwalls holding back the former embankment were to be buried and new concrete wingwalls were to be cast which splayed away from the access road at 25 degrees, providing restraint to the enlarged embankment supporting the new line.
50. Those new wingwalls were to be finished with gritstone cladding to match the existing wing walls on the unaltered south side of the bridge by re-using the coping stones, newels, and newel caps from the existing wing walls and where necessary, providing new stone ones to make up the shortfall.
51. The concrete bridge deck between the stone flanking walling was kept to a minimum and despite the necessary additional fencing the overall appearance of the consented bridge widening and associated works would have been broadly similar in appearance to the existing stone bridge with minimal concrete on show.

*The proposed amended design*

52. In contrast to the approved scheme, the application plans show a reinforced U-shaped steel deck painted grey alongside the existing bridge carrying the additional line across the span. This would be sat on large concrete pads either side of the existing stone spay walls below and amended plans have shown that the existing clearance underneath for the local farmers vehicles will not be compromised. The existing stone spay walls would be cut down in height with new taller stone-faced spay walls erected either side and extending further away from the north side of the bridge than the existing ones.
53. These new spay walls are to be formed from concrete piles and whilst the outer face is proposed to be clad with stone walling, the applicants explain they have an engineering need for them to be capped with mass concrete. This is essential to tie them all together and form one structure strong enough to hold back the compacted and enlarged embankment supporting the new line either side of the bridge. They explain that it is further a requirement on grounds of long-term integrity and ease of safety inspections that this concrete beam is not covered in stone masonry.
54. The use of such a large amount of exposed concrete in the structure will have an adverse visual impact upon the character and appearance of the bridge which would not meet our policy requirement for a high standard of detailed design. The appearance does have to be considered in the context of the very high engineering and safety requirements railway development must meet. These are acknowledged by your officer alongside the fact that this side of the bridge can only be viewed from the private access track.
55. Whilst the site is not open to general public view the high design threshold in our policy still applies and therefore we have asked the agent and applicant to look into alternative ways to improve the appearance of this beam and submit alternative enhancement methods to cladding in time for the Planning Committee. Officers have suggested they look into using a 'formliner' imprinted with stone walling profiles when the slab is cast followed by etching to give the concrete the appearance of stone walling such as used on the reservoir spillway at Riding Wood Reservoir in the Park where the engineering and safety requirement prevented the use of natural stone.

56. Whilst the detailed plan does not show light coloured metal safety railings on top of these new wing walls the submitted 'visualisation' does. This is a confirmed safety requirement and therefore officers have requested that this impact is 'softened' by having the safety fencing fixed at the back of the wing walls and match the visually more pleasing boundary fence proposed along the rest of the line. In addition, a condition to require the metal bridge deck to be painted a dark green rather than grey would also help tone down the visual impact and help it sit more in harmony with the rural location and other bridge colours in the local area.
57. In summary, the overall visual impact of the revised design is less sympathetic to the design and setting of the existing stone bridge than the now discounted approved scheme. Nevertheless, provided the best available enhancement to the appearance of the concrete beam and deck discussed above is achieved, officers have concluded that the limited visual harm of the design upon the existing bridge and the immediate local landscape is outweighed by the very significant public transport benefits arising from the scheme as a whole. In reaching this conclusion weight is attached to fact that the lane is private and hence there is extremely limited public visibility of this side of the bridge.

### **Other Issues**

58. The design and access concerns of the local Hathersage Parish Council and the local residents are understood and to a large extent shared by officers. In response the applicants have confirmed the drainage ditches and culvert will be maintained and that vehicle height clearance under the bridge is not compromised. There is however an imperative safety need for the height warning signage which has to stay and in any case is covered by separate advertisement regulations which allow for such operational signage.
59. The Highway Authority have suggested a Construction Method Statement be submitted via a condition of any consent. In this case the current consented project is working to a number of highly reports including a detailed construction working statement. It is therefore appropriate that these are adopted in any consent for this amended design rather than calling for new reports.
60. The above clarifications coupled with the modest enhancements to appearance sought will largely address the local objections and concerns to the point where in this private setting the weight that can be attached to them in the planning balance is now limited and concluded to be outweighed by the wider and significant public benefits of the proposal.

### **Conclusion**

61. The principle of the scheme has been previously accepted. This revised proposal arises out of an engineering need for an alternative scheme design. The amended design would have a modern, functional appearance due to the greater use of exposed steel and concrete and as a result would cause some minor harm to the setting of the existing bridge. However, that visual impact can be mitigated to a sufficient degree such that the limited harm to the existing bridge and very local private landscape setting are outweighed by the wider and significant public benefits resulting from the enhanced capacity on the railway line which must weigh heavily in the planning balance.
62. Subject to conditions covering further mitigation as set out above and a condition specifying colour, it is concluded that the revised design would accord with adopted

policies in the local development plan and the application as amended can therefore be recommended for conditional approval.

**Human Rights**

63. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

**List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

64. Nil

65. Report Author – John Keeley North Area Planning Team Manager