



Wigan Council
Places Directorate
Wigan Life Centre
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4 Travis Street
Manchester
M1 2NY

Date: 24/04/2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposed works to Ince Green Lane overbridge (WBS2/36) and footbridge to station platform (WBS2/38), Ince-in-Makerfield, Wigan: Request for Prior Approval under Schedule 2, Part 18 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

Further to recent and ongoing discussions with Wigan Council, I am writing to notify you that Network Rail intends to undertake works to replace the existing railway overbridge and station footbridge at Ince-in-Makerfield. The works are required as part of the Wigan to Bolton railway electrification project. This is a £78 million rail enhancement programme to electrify 13 miles of railway between Lostock Junction and Wigan North Western station. The project is under construction.

Existing context

Ince Green Lane overbridge (WBS2/36) traverses north-east/south-west, connecting the two halves of Ince-in-Makerfield intersected by the railway line. Ince Station comprises a ground level island platform to the west of the overbridge, connected to Ince Green Lane via a footbridge. To the north is the William Foster Playing Fields, the site of the forthcoming Football Hub. Christ Church, located to the south-east of the overbridge, is Grade II listed.

Existing condition

The existing overbridge deck is constructed of precast concrete with steel girders. The approaches are constructed of stone, concrete and artificial stone blockwork. The overbridge is supported by a central support trestle pier between the Up and Down lines of the railway, which provides a minimum clearance of 4.2 metres clearance to the soffit.

The existing parapets vary in height from 1.2 to 1.4 metres across the structure, measured from existing road profile.

At the south western side of the overbridge, a pedestrian footbridge provides access from Ince Green Lane down to the island station platform. The footbridge mainly comprises steel lattice girders supported by steel angle trestles. It is partially covered by a wire net canopy. A sandstone arch is located at the entrance to the footbridge. This structure shows signs of previous repair and is not statutorily or locally listed.

Proposed works

It is proposed to replace the overbridge with a new single-span bridge, comprising weathering steel girders with a stone effect textured concrete finish ('Allgau' pattern by Reckli) along the inside of the parapets (as well as approach parapets). It will have an increased minimum clearance of 4.5 metres (measured at the Up line), requiring the road over the railway to be raised by approximately 0.3 metres compared to the existing condition. The overbridge's parapets will be 1.8 metres high in accordance with the safety requirements for electrification of the railway.

Along the southern elevation, the existing stone approaches will be partially rebuilt with a mix of reused and imported stone to match the existing pattern, where possible.

Following extensive investigations by the engineering team, it was established that the existing steps that connect the footpath on the north-east approach to Canal Street below cannot be retained in use. This is because they cannot be made compliant with the levels to the new road. As a result, the steps will be decommissioned and capped to prevent public access. The structure will remain in situ to continue to serve as a buttress for the new overbridge. This will ensure that the structural integrity of the bridge is retained, while preventing trespass and removing any requirement for ongoing maintenance. The principle of the closure and decommissioning of the steps has been agreed with the Council.

The existing sandstone arch to the footbridge cannot be retained in situ due to the excavation works required to accommodate the installation of both the overbridge and footbridge. Similarly, it cannot be rebuilt like-for-like on account of the reconfiguration of the bridge following reconstruction. The new bridge will be set back further from the tracks than the existing condition, which would require the on-plan dimensions of the arch to be reduced, while necessitating a larger opening to the footbridge. The extensive changes required to re-provide the appearance of the stone arch would therefore result in considerable alteration to the existing structure, providing limited benefit to the public realm at Ince.

Following consultation with the Conservation Officer, Richard MacDonald, an alternative proposal was put forward to provide a new concrete arch with stone slip cladding and coper (either re-using the existing stone or providing a new version in reinforced concrete). This replacement design seeks to acknowledge that the existing sandstone arch contributes positively to the amenity of the public realm at Ince Green, whilst ensuring

that the installation of the replacement structure can be quality assured. The new arch will have the added benefit of providing a wider entrance to the footbridge than the existing condition. This approach has been agreed to in principle with Wigan Council.

The new footbridge to the island station platform comprises weathering steel, supported by a circular hollow steel column. As with the overbridge, the minimum clearance from the railway will increase, in this case from 4.69m to 4.90m (measured from the Down line). The main walkway of the footbridge will feature non-slip waterproof surfacing and will be covered with a steel mesh canopy. Fences (2.49m high) will frame the stairway down to the platform, with LED handrails to improve safety.

Attached to this application are the following drawing numbers:

- **0244734** – Site Location Plan
- **142797-624-00-WBS2-DRG-S-CV-360001** – (Overbridge) Existing General Arrangement, Rev. P01.1, dated 03/04/23
- **142797-624-00-WBS2-DRG-S-CV-360002** – (Overbridge) Proposed General Arrangement, Rev. P01.1, dated 03/04/23
- **142797-624-00-WBS2-DRG-S-CV-380001** – (Footbridge) Existing General Arrangement, Rev. P01.1, dated 03/04/23
- **142797-624-00-WBS2-DRG-S-CV-380002** – (Footbridge) Proposed General Arrangement, Rev. P01.1, dated 03/04/23

Site photos are provided at Figures 1-4 on the following pages.



Figure 1 - View of overbridge from the pedestrian footbridge, facing east. The steps to Canal Street (to be decommissioned) can be seen to the left of the image.



Figure 2 - View of footbridge from overbridge, facing west.



Figure 3 - Western approach, facing north east.



Figure 4 - The existing sandstone arch, denoting the entrance to the footbridge.

Benefits of electrification

The Government announced its plan to invest in the electrification of Britain's railway network in 2009 (see *Britain's Transport Infrastructure – Rail Electrification* published by the Department for Transport, July 2009). The benefits of electrification set out in this document include lower operational costs of electric trains, lower carbon emissions per passenger mile compared to diesel trains and zero emissions at the point of use (which confers additional benefits for air quality), increased capacity, improved reliability, and improved comfort for passengers.

The government's commitment to rail electrification is reaffirmed in DfT's *Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain* document published in 2021. This sets out an ambition to decarbonise the railways and deliver a net zero network by 2050.

Great British Railways: The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail (2021) identifies electrification as the main way to decarbonise the majority of the rail network and help cut carbon emissions from transport. An additional benefit offered by electrification set out in this report is the so-called 'sparks effect', whereby electrification has been shown to attract new passengers and freight customers to rail.

Permitted development rights

From a town planning perspective, the works at the bridge are permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 18, Class A (Miscellaneous development - development under local or private Acts or Order) of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

This section of railway was originally authorised by the Manchester and Southport Railway Act 1847. At that time, Ince Green Lane intersected it via a level crossing. In 1872, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Act enabled the railway to be widened and specifically mentions a new bridge to be constructed, which is now reflected in the existing circumstances. This latter act incorporates the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 (RCCA). The RCCA allows railway companies of the time and their successors in title (in this case, presently Network Rail) to undertake future works, not limited to the construction of the railway, but including '*all other acts necessary for making, maintaining, altering or repairing and using the railway*'.

Under Condition A.1 of Part 18, it is necessary for details of the plans and specifications to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for prior approval to the design and siting of the proposed works. It should be noted however that, under Condition A.2, the prior approval cannot be refused unless it is satisfied that the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land, or the design or external appearance would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification so as to avoid such injury. These are both addressed as follows:

Condition A.2(a) - Location

The works relate to long-established existing railway structures. The overbridge carries an adopted road (Ince Green Lane), which connects the northern and southern halves of the town. Further, pedestrian access to the Ince Station can only be achieved directly from the overbridge via the footbridge. Accordingly, the current location is essential in providing access to both sections of the town and to the station itself, so could not reasonably be re-located.

Condition A.2(b) – Neighbourhood Amenity

The existing overbridge is composed of a mix of concrete, stone and artificial stone blockwork, supported by a central steel support trestle encased in precast concrete, while the footbridge primarily comprises steel lattice girders. Both elements are noticeably weathered. With the exception of the sandstone arch, which is a valued element of the public realm at Ince, the neighbourhood amenity value afforded by the current structures is low owing to their age and condition. It is noted that the bridges are not statutorily or locally listed, and do not fall within a Conservation Area.

It is acknowledged that the overbridge and footbridge fall within the setting of Christ Church, which is Grade II listed. The design of the new overbridge and footbridge will ensure that the new overbridge and footbridge will complement the existing character, and therefore preserve the visual amenity of the area. Along the southern elevation of the overbridge the existing stone will be utilised where possible, and similar stone imported, to reconstruct the bridge approaches. Stone effect patterned concrete will be used on the inside parapets of the overbridge and approaches, which is compatible with existing surrounding materials. The concrete will weather over time and appear to tie in with the traditional stonework in the locality.

Pre-application correspondence with the Council raised awareness of the neighbourhood amenity value of the sandstone arch leading to the station footbridge. As explained in the 'proposed works' section above, the project design team explored options for its retention. It was established that this is not practical from an engineering perspective. The proposed replacement arch utilises stone slips and reinforced concrete to provide a high-quality finish that can be quality assured during construction. If the geometry allows, the existing copers may be able to be reused. The new design has been agreed in principle with the Council, and will make a positive contribution to neighbourhood amenity.

The stairway serving Canal Street must be retained for structural engineering purposes. The stair access will be decommissioned and closed to prevent loitering and anti-social behaviour. Therefore, there are no negative impacts on neighbourhood amenity expected as a result of this change. Please note, closure of the steps will be subject to a separate Stopping Up Order, as agreed with the Council's Public Rights of Way Officer.

Conclusion

As required under Part 18, I would be grateful to receive the Council's prior approval for the works to the structure. If you wish to discuss the proposals or require further information please contact Tillie Baker, Associate Planner at RJP Town Planners, who is

leading on consents for the project team. She can be reached on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED].

Please note that under the provisions of paragraph 7(b) of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, the Prior Approval application should be determined within a period of 8 weeks beginning with the day immediately following that on which the application is received by the authority.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Town Planning Manager