



Historic England

Mr Chris Johnston
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Moorlands House
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Staffordshire Moorlands
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Direct Dial: 0121 625 6848

Our ref: L01502793

15 June 2022

Dear Mr Johnston

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021

BRIDGE 37 LEEK OLD ROAD, LONGSDON, STAFFORDSHIRE Application No. SMD/2022/0264

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2022 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

The importance and significance of this picturesque Grade II listed bridge straddling the Caldon Canal is multi-faceted.

Built as a branch of the cross-country Trent & Mersey Canal, Caldon Canal runs from Stoke-on-Trent to Froghall in Staffordshire. The canal opened in 1779 and runs for 18 miles with 17 locks and a variety of waterway buildings and structures. Bridge 37 is an important part of that early canal network, and prior to unfortunate events of March 2020, was very well preserved with limited alterations and retaining all of its stone copiers.

Not only does the design and form of Bridge 37 showcase the ingenuity and construction techniques of the early 19th century, it also has associations with the great industrial engineers of the day such as James Brindley, who surveyed the route of the Caldon Canal, and John Rennie who was responsible for the bridge's design.

Furthermore, Bridge 37 also contributes positively to the important complex of waterway buildings and structures at Hazelhurst Junction which includes several locks and bridges, a canal lock side pond, a cast iron footbridge and lock keeper's cottage. Whilst all individually listed, in combination they represent a now relatively rare example of largely unaltered early and mid-19th century canalscape.



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For these reasons Bridge 37 is of considerable importance not only in its own right, but also due to its contribution to the significance of the Caldon Canal Conservation Area, and the complex of canalside buildings and structures along its length.

In view of the highly sensitive nature of the bridge and its surroundings we would draw your attention to the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, regarding the need to pay special attention to the preservation of listed buildings and their settings, and the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Section 16 of the NPPF also emphasises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and highlights the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

As you are aware, we provided comments in 2020 in connection with the application reference SMD/2020/0369 to demolish parts of Bridge 37 following its partial collapse. At that time we were greatly concerned that no definitive proposals were in place to ensure its reinstatement. In our letter (dated 27 August 2020) we stated that the permanent loss of Bridge 37, or its replacement with an inappropriate structure, would have a harmful impact on not only the significance of the Caldon Canal Conservation Area, but also the complex of associated separately listed canal buildings and structures along its length

After much discussion with the Canal and River Trust and your former conservation officer it was agreed that given not only the intrinsic importance of Bridge 37, but also its contribution to the conservation area and the wider canalscape - whilst also noting the considerable loss that had occurred through its collapse and subsequent demolition - the most appropriate way forward would be to reinstate in this location a structure of the same form, scale and character. Such a structure would serve the same function and be in the 'spirit' of the former bridge, using what original materials it had been possible to salvage.

Clearly the success of this endeavour will be heavily reliant on the quality of materials, workmanship and finish. We note from the Design and Access Statement that a new brick sample to match the existing was approved by your previous conservation adviser. We also note that appropriate local sand and gravel is being sourced and that a sample panel will be produced for your consideration. Such continuing attention to detail by the Canal and River Trust and your authority will obviously be essential going forward.

Recommendation

Given the highly specific constraints represented by this particular situation Historic England has no objection in heritage terms to the proposed way forward.



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Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Julie Taylor

Julie Taylor

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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