



Network Rail
Floor 4b/13
George Stephenson House
Toft Green
York YO1 6JT

Development Control
Planning Services
London Borough Of Camden
2nd Floor 5 Pancras Square
Town Hall
Argyle Street
London
WC1H 9JE

TP/LNE/2023-102

15th August 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

APPLICATION FOR DISMANTLING AND RE-CONSTRUCTION OF WALLS WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA, ASSOCIATED WITH THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGE SPC1/14, AGAR GROVE, CAMDEN

Please find enclosed the completed form and associated plans relating to a request for planning consent for the dismantling and re-construction of various walls within the Camden Square Grove Conservation Area at Agar Grove. Please note that this is an application for demolition only, since the removal of bridge walls and parapets is normally “permitted” under Parts 8 & 18 to Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 and full planning permission would not be required.

General Description

The Midland Main Line out from St. Pancras station crosses beneath Agar Grove by means of a 2-span riveted steel overbridge with masonry jack arches spanning between longitudinal girders. The bridge is supported on masonry abutments and a central masonry pier.

The structure carries Agar Grove and the road junctions between Murray Street and St Augustine’s Road over the electrified lines. There is also a Discharge siding present which runs from the south and terminates beneath the southern edge girder. SPC1/14 supports a railway Relocatable Equipment Building (REB) close to the northern edge girder and is close to buildings at the north-west corner.

The superstructure to both spans is a series of 20 main girders supporting transverse jack arches. The spans are supported on masonry brickwork piers and abutments. The railway beneath is electrified with the 25kV OLE system, supported from the soffit of the bridge decks.

An assessment of the bridge carried out in 2019 concluded that the bridge failed its Bridgeguard 3 assessment for 40 tonne weights and has corrosion issues. It also has weak parapets and footpaths on the low mileage side. In addition, the parapets are not a compliant height for an electrified railway.

Layout at road level

The area over the bridge is substantially built up, with a range of housing and some local shops. A block of flats surrounded by a walled garden (4 St. Augustine's Road) is located directly over the East abutment. The majority of the bridge lies within the Camden Square Conservation Area, though the boundary runs along the middle of Agar Grove and the southern part of the bridge is not included in the conservation area.

The predominant existing brickwork in the area is London Stock, except that to the southern parapet on Agar Grove which is currently Staffordshire Blue Engineering Brick. As the area is residential there are a number of pedestrianised areas with street furniture including planters, waste bins, lighting columns and a bus stop. A key feature on the bridge is the Grade II listed red telephone box on the north-west of the bridge. There are also two large trees (London Planes) in this area, one of which interfaces with the edge of the abutment. There is also a cycle path at the southwest corner of the bridge, which exits onto Agar Grove. The southern walkways in front of the parapets are raised with trief kerbs and have pedestrian guardrails running alongside them, excluding in the area of dropped kerbs for the crossing zone.

General Works – Background and detailed proposal

To remedy defects the bridge is to be re-constructed, with the existing deck with a new composite deck which will comprise of weathering steel beams and an in-situ reinforced composite bridge deck. The deck will bear onto new precast concrete cill units with mechanical bearings. The bridge beams will be detailed to provide containment for statutory undertaker's services, including water, gas, electricity and telecommunications cables. These works are covered by Network Rail's permitted development rights and do not form part of this application.

However, because we will need to remove several lengths of wall which are over 1 metre high adjacent to a highway within a conservation area, planning permission is required for those elements of the overall work.

The lengths of wall to be removed and subsequently re-built are:

40 metres of wall running from a point approximately opposite no. 1a Murray Street to a point opposite No.4 St Augustine's Road
30 metres of wall surrounding the gardens to No.4 St Augustine's Road itself.

In addition the parapet of the bridge that runs along the south side of Agar Grove is to be re-built with removal of the existing wire netting extension to the existing engineering brick parapet. The re-built wall will be entirely of blue engineering brick to the appropriate height of 1.8m, with triangular concrete coping. However, this wall lies outwith the conservation area but is included here for information.

The wall running around the private gardens is approximately 6 foot (1.8m) high and comprises of predominantly London Stock brick with inset panels and a row of two chamfered blue engineering edge bricks (one of which runs along the base of the inset panels only), and a rectangular stone coping.

The wall running along the north parapet of the railway bridge (along Murray Road and the north side of St. Augustine's Road) is of similar construction, though it is higher (2.5 metres) and stepped, and instead of the two rows of engineering brick it has a base course of engineering brick but again has the inset panels. A significant length of the parapet beyond the bridge itself (10 metres) has in the past been re-built entirely in blue engineering brick, the boundary between the two types of brick marking the edge of the bridge itself beneath the road. Most of the copings are of concrete construction though in the section of blue engineering brick the remains of substantial stone copings are evident. There are two pairs of additional steel entrance doors set into the wall, one for access to a DNO cubicle and the other for maintenance access purposes.

The walls of London Stock brick are to be carefully dismantled and re-built to the same design to match the existing materials, including the masonry features, with London Stock Brick and blue engineering brick used as appropriate throughout. For the length of wall of full blue engineering brick on the northern side of St Augustine's Road (elevation L-proposed), a small section of wall will be removed with the remainder staying in situ save for an additional access which again will be of steel construction. Additionally, another DNO cabinet will be inserted into the wall at this point. The remainder of this portion of wall will remain undisturbed. Although in pre-application advice a suggestion was made as to whether the blue engineering brick on this section could be replaced with London Stock, the project is not funded for total replacement given most of it is not directly over the bridge structure itself; however, a section of wall which has to be removed will be replaced in London Stock, but the remainder will be unchanged as blue brick. This helps to understand the geography of the bridge, marking as it does the extent of the bridge beneath.

Note the re-location of the Grade II listed red telephone box on Murray Street west of the structure will be the subject of a separate Listed Building Application.

In addition, it is necessary, as part of the larger scheme, to remove the two London Plane trees on Murray Street, one of which directly interfaces with the West abutment and given the proximity of the second tree to the first both will need to be removed. We will issue, under separate cover, the requisite six weeks' notice of our intent to remove trees in the vicinity.

Relevant Policy

The Act

Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('1990 Act') imposes a statutory duty on local planning authorities, when considering whether to grant listed building consent to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interests which it possesses. The Courts have held that when a local planning authority finds that a proposed development would harm a heritage asset the authority must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of avoiding such harm to give effect to its statutory duty under section 16 of the 1990 Act.

Since the key planning consideration is in relation to the re-construction of a boundary wall in the Camden Square Conservation Area, it is pertinent to look at advice at both the national and local level. Central government guidance is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019). Paragraph 8 of the NPPF says planning should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development by balancing its economic, social and environmental roles. Paragraph 11 says that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development; footnote 6 of paragraph 11 contains restrictions where this presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply, including designated heritage assets.

Of particular relevance to this application is Section 16 of the NPPF which requires local planning authorities to take account in determining applications of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. It advises consent to be refused (paragraph 195) where there is substantial harm to a heritage asset unless it can be demonstrated that this is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits or (Paragraph 196) where there is less than substantial harm, this be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Local Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 requires that determinations be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Camden the development plan consists of the Camden Local Plan which was adopted on the 3rd of July 2017.

Paragraph 1.34 of the plan sets out strategic objectives which include: creating the conditions for growth, to strengthen Camden's nationally important economy, to promote and support the successful development of growth areas including Kings Cross/St Pancras, to promote sustainable transport for all, to promote and protect the high levels of amenity and quality of life.

The following specific policies are relevant to the consideration of the listed building application and the conservation area planning application:

- Policy D1 ‘Design’ seeks to secure high quality design including preserving and enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with policy D2.
- Policy D2 confirms the position of the NPPF that substantial harm or loss of a heritage asset will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that substantial public benefits outweigh the harm or loss. Similarly, less than substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets will not be supported unless the public benefits convincingly outweigh that harm. Further policy D2 says that proposals to alter or extend listed buildings will be resisted where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building.
- Policy T1 seeks to promote sustainable transport by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.

Since the fundamental purpose of the scheme is to ensure the safety and integrity of the road bridge over the Midland Main Line it is clearly in the best interests of all to look favourably on the principle. Given it will ensure the on-going reliability of the bridge and that the “do nothing” scenario could lead to the closure of both the road and railway, it is important for the economic and environmental well-being of the Borough that the bridge is re-built.

Significance

In assessing the significance and contribution of the walls to the Conservation Area, the starting point is to look at the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal of 2011. Whilst it does not specifically mention the architectural quality of the boundary walls as a notable feature of the Conservation Area, it should be noted that over 12 years have passed since the appraisal was first written.

Since that time there have been many alterations to the area, including the development of the plot of land on the corner of Agar Grove & St Augustine’s Grove. Therefore, the context and the assessment of the conservation area will have changed to some extent. Nevertheless, the statement confirms that the conservation area contains some of the most important historic buildings and structures in the Borough and identifies areas in need of improvement, including the NR compound at the junction of Murray Street and St Augustine’s Road.

Although removal of the walls technically amounts to demolition, they are to be re-built to the same design and use of materials as the existing, and therefore there would be no significant difference visually to the appearance of the conservation area. Whilst an additional entrance into one wall is proposed on the north parapet this in itself is a very minor element and does not detract from the overall character, particularly given the piecemeal appearance of the current

parapet. It is considered that the proposal represents less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area in so far as the original wall materials would be lost but replicated using the same materials and design so that there is no overall loss in quality and appearance. Additionally, the public benefit that accrues from the re-constructed rail bridge is unquestionable, given the importance of the railway line below linking the Capital and the Midlands, as well as the importance of Agar Grove for road traffic and public transport through the Borough – not to carry out the bridgeworks would have serious implications for both road and rail traffic alike to the detriment of the local and regional economy. As such we are confident the proposal is consistent with Policies D1 & D2 of the Local Plan.

It should also be noted that we do not propose to use brick slips as originally intended on certain facades but will use standard London stock throughout for those walls that are to be demolished. If required we will be happy to accept a condition seeking a sample panel of the rebuilt wall to be agreed prior to the actual re-construction as opposed to prior to demolition, so as not to unnecessarily delay the works.

In line with the original observation of the Appraisal, the opportunity will be taken to tidy the area around the NR compound through removal of the REB and surplus material.

The walls have been identified as having no ecological value.

You will find enclosed the following:

Location Plan

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002100 Existing Site Plan

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002101 Existing External Elevations

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002102 Existing Internal Elevations

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002200 Revision 03 Proposed Site Plan

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002201 Proposed External Elevations*

Drawing 165223-BNU-DRG-ECV-002202 Revision 02 Proposed Internal Elevations*

*Note – these include elevations of the southern parapet which is included for information only and does not form part of this application.

As this is demolition in a conservation area there is no fee payable in this instance.

Please let me know if you require any further information. No doubt you will acknowledge the application in due course.

Yours Faithfully

Tony Rivero
Town Planning Manager EM & LNE