

Application details

Ref: 6/2017/0550	App Type: Listed building consent	Case officer: Andrew Collins
Applicant: Dorset County Council		
Address: Wareham Railway Station, Access Road to Railway, Northport, Wareham, BH20 4AS		
Description: Erect new step free access ramp on either side of existing rail bridge and other associated works (Application for Listed Building Consent to be determined by Purbeck District Council))		
Planning Committee: 31 January 2018		

Reason for decision process for this application

The Planning Committee is considering this application because:

Previous applications for listed building consent have been considered by the Planning Committee.

Recommendation

To **grant** listed building consent subject to conditions as set out in the attached Appendix.

Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Impact on the significance of heritage assets, their setting and conservation	Acceptable. Officers consider that the public benefit arising from the necessity of the scheme outweighs the harm caused to the bridge and the historic context of the railway station. The harm is less than a previously approved scheme.

Summary

All significant planning matters have been appropriately and adequately addressed. Officers are recommending approval.

Main report

The site

The site is Wareham Foot Crossing (also known as Wareham Level Crossing and previously known as Sandford Road Level Crossing) which is adjacent to Wareham Railway Station. It provides the main and well used pedestrian link between a large well established area of housing and businesses to the north of the railway (Carey, Northmoor, Northport and Sandford) and the town centre to the south. The existing crossing is not a public right of way.

The existing Wareham Crossing has been identified as being high risk (danger) to the public. This has been highlighted by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), now known as Office for Rail and Road, in 2009. Following this, Dorset County Council has employed attendants at the level crossing to control the electric gates and monitor public use. This is at a cost of £120,000 per year. There is currently a lease between Network Rail and Dorset County Council that runs until 2038. This will not be renewed and the crossing will be closed. The proposal is for alterations to the existing Wareham Station footbridge to facilitate crossing the railway.

Wareham Railway Station was built in 1886 and is a Grade II listed building. The existing footbridge, which although not listed in its own right also benefits from the listed building status of the station buildings as it is within their curtilage.

The text of the listing describes the station buildings as “*Red brick with ashlar dressings. Pitched tile roof. Red brick stacks with ashlar coping. 1 storey with attics. 2 coped gables with finials and kneelers; that to east shaped, topped with pediment, and with 3 pilasters taking cornice half way up; that to west has stone mullioned window, with full entablature and pediment over central part. Between gables is 1 attic dormer with pargetted front, pitched roof and casements. 2 one-storey extensions with coved eaves cornices at either end. Centre of roof ridge crowned by octagonal turret, with ogival lead roof and weather-vane. Casement windows on yard side. Sashes on platform side. Platform shelters taken on cast iron columns of eclectic design with ornamental cast iron spandrels which support roof trusses. Pitched corrugated iron roofs with cut wooden valances. Weatherboard and panelled shelters with contemporary benches on up platform. Elaborate columns gas standards on both platforms east and west of shelters.*”

Alternative solutions to the proposed footbridge have been investigated and ruled out including a lift solution, subway solution and the retention of the automated barrier. These have all been fully investigated and ruled out for various reasons which are detailed in the submitted information.

Proposed development

This application is proposing to make alterations to the existing Wareham Station footbridge to facilitate crossing the railway.

The previous schemes at the site (granted in 2013 and refused in 2015) involved the removal of a staircase on both the northern and southern sides of the bridge.

This application retains all existing staircases and proposed a new ramp either side of the railway bridge.

In detail, it is proposed to cut new openings in to the eastern side of the existing footbridge parapet and construct a new ramp structure of steel and brickwork on both the northern and southern sides of the railway. In addition, there will be an extension of the footpath from the station to the ramp on the southern side of the railway, and the ramps will be illuminated with lighting columns with 2no 8m high columns for each ramp.

The lower levels of the ramp structure will comprise a brick façade.

The ramps are based on a constant gradient of 1:12 including a series of horizontal landings.

On completion, the existing Wareham Crossing will be closed and all associated infrastructure removed. Fencing will be erected at either end to block the existing crossing off. New fencing is also proposed under the ramps to prevent trespassing onto the operational railway.

This application for listed building consent is accompanied by a planning application (6/2017/0639) which is being determined by Dorset County Council. The District Council has been consulted on these proposals.

Relevant planning history

Planning permission and listed building consent was previously granted by the Planning Committee in August 2013 for a scheme to demolish a set of stairs on either side of the existing footbridge and install ramps to allow users a safe passage across the railway line (references 6/2013/0424 and 6/2013/0425). Once installed, the existing crossing was to be closed. Following the granting of these permissions and due to issues relating to the presence of underground services and difficulties in fabricating certain parts of the ramped structure for the southern side of the railway, Network Rail advised that it is not possible to construct the scheme.

6/2013/0424 and 6/2013/0425 – Alterations to Wareham Station Footbridge to facilitate the crossing of the railway – Approved by the Planning Committee 28/8/13

6/2015/0478 and 6/2015/0479 – Construction of access for all pedestrian bridge with associated lighting and highway works, including formation of pedestrian crossing and creation of a new footpath – Refused – 30/9/15

The listed building application (6/2015/0479) was refused for the following reason:

The proposals, by removal of some of the stairs to the bridge and substantial modern additions are not in accord with National Planning Policy Framework: Section 7 - Requiring good design and Section 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment and Decision-taking. It has not been demonstrated that the significant harm to, and loss of part of the heritage asset would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal and is therefore contrary to National Planning Policy Framework: Section 12 -47 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (particularly paragraphs 131, 132 and 133) and policy LHH of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1.

Pre-application discussions

None directly with Purbeck District Council

Relevant issues for this application

Impact on the significance of heritage assets, their setting and conservation

The development will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings and structures and the character of the area. This gives rise to a strong presumption against listed building consent being granted. The presumption is a statutory one. The Council in exercising its planning functions is required by section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The presumption may be displaced if it can be shown to be outweighed by material considerations of significant weight.

The proposals are undoubtedly a significant building operation which would fundamentally change the character of the area. A number of different options have been considered and dismissed for a variety of reasons. Officers agree that adding Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant ramps to the existing bridge is the only realistic and feasible option. The size of the proposals is dictated by design and safety standards and the physical constraints of the site. The ramp elements of the bridge are long but the length is necessary in order to achieve the gradient required to achieve Equality Act (2010) compliance and ensure that it caters for all potential users. Dorset County Council have designed the ramps to be a 1 in 12 grade, an appropriate width and with the appropriate number of landing positions so they can be accessed by all. The level of handrails and height of guardrails has been designed to provide adequate support to users who require it.

The impact of the proposal on protected characteristics, as defined by the 2010 Equalities Act, has been assessed by completing an Equality Impact Assessment. This assessment has been reviewed by Dorset County Council Equalities and Diversity group and has shown that the proposal will have a positive impact on the defined characteristics of Age, Disability and Pregnancy and Maternity.

The development will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings and structures and the character of the area. Officers consider that the public benefit of providing a safe and permanent means for pedestrians to cross the railway line outweighs the harm caused to the bridge and the historic context of the railway station. Reaching such a conclusion is supported in paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states;

“Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- *the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site*

- *no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation*
- *conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible*
- *the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."*

This view is shared by the Design and Conservation Officer.

Previously, more intrusive alterations were proposed to the listed bridge structure. These were approved by the Planning Committee. These were not implemented.

Relevant Planning Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework:

Core Principles, Section 7 - Requiring good design, Section 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment and Decision-taking.

Purbeck Local Plan Part 1:

SD - presumption in favour of sustainable development, D - design and LHH - landscape, historic environment and heritage.

Officers have also considered:

National Planning Practice Guidance - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment and design.

Purbeck District design guide supplementary planning document adopted January 2014.

Wareham townscape character appraisal supplementary planning document adopted September 2012.

Wareham conservation area appraisal adopted January 2012.

Representations received

Who	Relevant Points	Case Officers Response
Wareham Town Council	<p>Recommend refusal for the following reasons,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed ramps will significantly harm the street scene. 2. The ramps due to their excessive scale, bulk and massing fail to preserve the listed bridge and station. 3. There are no public benefits that outweigh this harm. The improvements to public safety are non-existent because the crossing is considered safe and any additional safety requirements could be facilitated by linking the closing of the existing gates to the signalling system. 4. Due to the steepness of the ramps and the required distance to walk this would put people off from using them. <p>Comments are also made that the street light columns do not appear to be</p>	<p>The majority of the comments raised relate to the planning merits of the case as opposed to the impact upon the listed building, which is being considered by DCC.</p> <p>The impact upon the heritage asset is acknowledged but officers believe significant weight be given to the public benefit of installing a permanent right of way across the railway. After carrying out this balance, officers believe the public benefits outweigh the harm to the heritage asset.</p>

	<p>depicted, the installation of automated barriers at Holmebridge and a speed limit would retain the existing crossing. Also they can find no record of being consulted over the placing of a stop order on the right of way in 1973.</p>	
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Who	Relevant Points
Historic England	<p>Historic England accepts the current proposal as the "least-worst" option for providing step-free access at Wareham Station, which will enable closure of the existing level crossing that has been identified as a safety risk. The existing brick-built footbridge will be retained, with substantial ramps added either side of the railway lines. The ramps will detract from the relationship between the listed station buildings and the attractive signal box adjacent to the crossing that falls within the station's curtilage. It will also have a minor adverse impact on the relationship between the listed station buildings and the independently-listed goods shed to the east, which is now converted to an office.</p> <p>This harm to the setting of the listed buildings is, however, less than substantial, and we are satisfied that every effort has been made to minimise the visual impact as far as possible. Your authority is therefore in a position to carry out the 'balancing exercise' of weighing the modest harm to the historic environment against any wider public benefit offered by the proposals.</p>
Council's Design and Conservation Officer	<p>Has no objection subject to conditions.</p> <p>Details that the need for the improvement of access and strong public benefit of providing a safe alternative to crossing the railway line is well established. Refers to the consent granted in 2013 and the harm this entailed with the removal of one flight of steps either side of the bridge. As such a substantial amount of historic fabric would have been lost and aspects of the historic design compromised.</p> <p>The current proposal does not entail the removal of the steps, leaving the existing structure largely intact. The new stairway design itself appears in some respects more compact than previously proposed.</p> <p>Based on straight comparison between the existing approved scheme and the currently proposed scheme, the latter would most sensitive. On this basis raises no objections.</p>

Neighbour comments received and case officer response

The Council received 50 comments from neighbours and residents about this planning application. Of which 49 raise concerns. There has been support in principle from Swanage Railway. They state that there is a long term objective to provide a railway link between Wareham and Swanage. A trial service was carried out in June 2017. But the signalling system is not linked with the existing crossing equipment and the sidings located to the east cannot be entered into service until the level crossing is decommissioned. Also the trains have to stay on the platforms at Wareham Station between arrival and departure which has led to environmental concerns from nearby residents. They therefore have no objection in principle but are aware of local concerns and to mitigate these as much as possible. The representations are all available in full on the Council's

website and this report addresses the key planning points that they raised. The following table sets out a summary of the key issues from the comments as well as the case officer's response to them.

Issue	Case officer response
Harmful to the listed bridge	This issue is addressed in the main body of the report under the section titled 'Impact on the significance of heritage assets, their setting and conservation.'
Does not comply with the Equality Act 2010	This is not a material planning consideration in relation to this listed building application. This is a consideration for DCC in their determination of the planning application.
The ramps are not needed	Information has been supplied in relation to the need to replace the crossing for consideration for DCC in their determination of the planning application.
Users of the ramps will feel less safe and the fear of crime is a consideration in determining planning applications	This is not a planning application and a consideration for DCC in their determination of the planning application.
The proposal would discourage people walking and cycling with an increase of short car journeys and a reduction in the overall vitality and viability of the town centre	This is not a planning application and a consideration for DCC in their determination of the planning application.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The development proposal is not liable to a community infrastructure levy charge.

Appendix – Recommended planning conditions

1. The work must start within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: This is a mandatory condition imposed by Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to encourage development to take place at an early stage.

2. The works permitted must be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans BS4971/700/04, BS4971/700/05, BS4971/701/01 and BS4971/704/02 specifications and written particulars unless subsequent variation is agreed in writing by the Council.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and interest of proper planning and to ensure the works are in keeping with the character of the Listed Building.

3. Prior to its installation, details of the proposed guard and hand rail and its finish, including 1:5 sections showing the profiles to be used, must be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council. The scheme must then be constructed in accordance with these details.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring details of the scheme conserve and are sympathetic to the special architectural interest, character and fabric of the listed building.

4. Prior to its use in construction, details of the brick, brickwork bond, and coping detail to be used in the approved scheme must be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council. The scheme must then be constructed in accordance with these details.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring details of the scheme conserve and are sympathetic to the special architectural interest, character and fabric of the listed building.

5. The development must be undertaken in accordance with the submitted lighting details as detailed in section 6.1 of the Design & Access Statement. No changes shall be made to this lighting scheme unless the Council gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory implementation of the approved lighting scheme in the interests of the visual amenity of the listed bridge and surrounding area.

6. Statement of positive and proactive working: In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. The Council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by; offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

For this application: the application was acceptable as submitted and the agent was updated of progress of application throughout process.



