

Ms Sara Jones
Shropshire Council (Planning South)
Westgate
Bridgnorth
Shropshire
WV16 5AA

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: L00502306

9 March 2016

Dear Ms Jones

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

**SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY, STATION LANE, BRIDGNORTH
Application No 16/00157/LBC, 16/00156/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2016 notifying Historic England of the above application.

Summary

On the strategy of the proposal, we consider that the location and scale of the car parking and access roads, and the new buildings, are a reasonable approach to the future management of this intensively used multi-period heritage site. This acceptability is entirely dependent, however, upon sympathetic development that minimises the impact upon the wider environment. We also note that this plan represents the limit of capacity of the site, and that any future expansion would almost certainly require the relocation of some current activities to other sites on the railway.

Historic England Advice

Bridgnorth Station is the working terminus of the historic Severn Valley Railway. It comprises the almost complete survival of a principal branch-line station dating from the mid-19th century. The principal station building is listed grade II, Heritage List or England unique identifier 1053173. The overall significance is set out in the Conservation Plan (Kevin Simpson 2014). We agree with the ascribing of 'Conservation Principles' (English Heritage, April 2008) based values contained in this report, that underpin the great significance of the site overall.

The site is also overlooked by two nearby scheduled ancient monuments, Pan Pudding Hill, a Norman ring-work, NHLE 1013493, to the south-west, and Bridgnorth Castle, NHLE 1004783, to the north-east. They both occupy naturally defensible ground. Bridgnorth castle is on a plateau with sandstone cliffs that abruptly and dramatically mark the southern limit of the historic town. Pan Pudding Hill is outside the town, facing the castle across the steep valley that contains the railway terminus.



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Together the sites can explain the relationship between the town and its hinterland, especially of the Norman Conquest and Civil War siege that included the bombarding of the town from Pan Pudding Hill. Despite the often busy historic railway terminus between (and well below) them, there is, in general, unencumbered views between them. This relationship contributes to the significance of both monuments, and could be damaged by over-development, especially within elevated positions. Full agreement on all design and detail should therefore be required in order to minimise the impact upon the significance of designated heritage assets.

The acceptability in principle of this level of development is entirely dependent upon very careful attention to the details of all parts of the proposals. New build elements, and the improvements to existing buildings, including listed buildings, must be evidence based and of demonstrable high quality. In particular, it is the proposed car park and egress road that will have most potential to damage the significance of the ancient monuments either side of the station. This is because the car park within Field 1 will be elevated from the main site, as will the egress road within Field 2 and within Field 3 close to Pan Pudding Hill. Historic England accepts that impact can be lessened by sympathetic design. The car park should therefore be of low impact materials, be largely unlit, and include a full landscape scheme to soften its impact. The egress road should similarly be of low impact materials, be a single carriageway, be strictly one-way, have only essential and low impact signage, and include design measures to prevent cars accessing areas within Fields 2 and 3 through which it will pass. Larger vehicles (larger than a car) should be prevented from accessing the car park and egress road altogether. A detailed landscaping (including planting) scheme should be required for the car park, and egress road. The proposals should include a conservation management approach for Pan Pudding Hill that will detail the clearance of scrub and trees from the scheduled area, the establishing of wood pasture including within Field 3, and the provision of public access and interpretation.

As regards the new station building and the new staff hostel, both are well researched and appropriate applications of the architectural vernaculars of the Great Western Railway Company. We do have some reservations about the potential visual impact of the tower of the hostel, and suggest that further presentation material should show how visible it will be from the Castle Walk, and from the station platform. Success with these historicist styles is heavily dependent on a scrupulous attention to detail.

The site is partly within a Conservation Area within which special attention to preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area must be made, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, paragraph 72. The development should also have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed railway station building and its setting, paragraph 16. In terms of the NPPF we remind the Council of the requirements of section 12, especially paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 and 137. In this case our view is that the test within paragraph 134 is appropriate.



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We also recommend that the Council Historic Environment Team considers an archaeological mitigation strategy due to the proximity of Pan Pudding Hill and the nearby site of a Civil War battery recorded on the Council's Historic Environment Record.

Recommendation

Planning permission and listed building consent for all building work should be conditional on the Council's prior approval of all external details, materials and finishes. We also recommend that Conditions be imposed requiring prior approval of all landscape details, materials and finishes, both for the hard landscaping around the buildings, the car parking and access/egress roads, and the soft landscaping and planting within Fields 1,2 and 3. We would be willing to assist in the discharging of these Conditions.


We would welcome the opportunity of advising further. Please consult us again if any additional information or amendments are submitted. If, notwithstanding our advice, you propose to approve the scheme in its present form, please advise us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Bill Klemperer


Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments

E-mail: 

cc Andy Wigley, Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team Manager.



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